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COMIC SHOP NEWS 1992 COLLECTOR'S GUIDE

YOUR DAYS AS AN EXPERT COMICS COLLECTOR BEGIN NOW

Comic Shop News 1992
Collector's Guide

Introduction

If you're just now becoming a comic book collector, you're about to discover one of the most interesting of all collecting hobbies. There are thousands upon thousands of comics collectors all over the world who share your interest in comics with you, people who share your enthusiasm for comic books as a form of entertainment and as a collectible hobby.

Collecting comics has obvious advantage over collecting stamps or coins, the only two collectible hobbies with more enthusiasts that comic book collecting. With stamps or coins, virtually all you can do is collect; you can't read your stamps or your coin and enjoy them, you can simply look at them, keep them organized, and file them away.

If you're a new comics collector this year, you probably have a lot of company; 1991 has seen all-time comics sales records broken not once, but twice, and that probably means that many new collectors have joined the already-large number of comic book collectors who enjoy the comics medium.

With comic books, you have a world of enjoyment in your collectible hobby. You can read and re-read the comic books you collect and enjoy them each and every time.

This ***Collectors' Guide*** is set up to help the beginning collector and the novice collector; we've also included valuable interviews and articles about today's comics companies so that even the veteran collector will gain something from the ***CSN Collector's Guide.***

The first segment of the book will give a little background on comics collecting, along with some tips about how to collect, how to organize your collection, how to grade your collection, etc. There are a lot of you who are just now getting into the fascinating hobby of comics collecting, and we're hoping this ***Guide*** makes it easy for you to become a collector.

The second segment of the book will update you on just what the various comic book companies are doing and on what you should look for in your collection. We'll also give you a little background history on most of the major companies in the field, just to let you put everything in perspective.

Your local comics shop--the place where you picked up this ***CSN Collectors' Guide***--is your best collecting resource, of course. They made this ***Guide*** available to you because they have a genuine interest in comics and in collecting, so if you have any questions--or if you feel so motivated after reading all this that you're ready to venture into the world of comics collecting--talk to the people at your local comics shop (and be sure to mention the ***CSN Guide***!).

Another valuable resource to you as a comics collector is ***Comic Shop News; CSN*** is the largest-circulation ongoing comics news publication in the field, and it's available only through comics specialty shops like the one where you got this ***Guide.*** Each week, we bring the you latest in news from the field, spotlights on major new projects, reviews of upcoming works, interviews with some of the industry's most talented and fascinating professionals, and a checklist of books you can expect to see in your comics shop for the next few weeks. If your local shop is running out before you can get your copy of ***Comic Shop News***, be sure to let them know--we don't want anyone to do without!

Now, on to the ***4th Annual Comic Shop News Collectors' Guide.*** Happy Collecting!

Glossary

A problem with any new hobby is learning the proper terminology; comics collectors have several unique terms that are a part of the hobby. Let's look at some of the terms you're likely to find used in the field of comics collecting, and explain just what they are.

Adaptation: A comic based on someone else's work; very often, an adaptation is a comic book version of another writer's novel, film, poem, opera, etc.

Anthology: An anthology is a comic book that contains several different unrelated stories, usually by different creative teams.

Ashcan Edition: Originally, this was a sample copy prepared for office use but never intended to be sold. Nowadays, several publishers use the term to refer to a very small run of a comic, usually xeroxed, that is privately distributed to friends, reviewers, etc. In some cases, an ashcan edition is also a signed limited edition.

B&W - Black and White, a popular printing method for many comics from a variety of independent publishers. Most B&W titles do still have color covers, however.

Baxter Book: A comic printed on higher-quality paper which is stiffer, whiter, and holds ink better than the mediocre newsprint used on so many comics. A Baxter Book usually has higher production values--better printing plates, stronger colors, more detail--than a regular comic.

Biweekly: Published every two weeks; some publishers use this to mean published twice a month, but there really is a difference--about two issues a year worth. ***Marvel Comics Presents*** is the most successful biweekly

Bookshelf Format - Marvel's name for the square-bound, heavy-paper, high quality format that originated with ***Dark Knight*** from DC. (see *prestige format*)

Colorist: The person who adds the color to the comic art, working from photostats (that's why the original artwork is still in black-and-white). Color can be done with a limited palette using flat colors; it can be painted in a variety of media; or it can be done via computer coloring programs. It's not as easy a job to color a comic as you might think; see Four-Color for more details.

Comics Code Authority: An industry regulation group created in the 1950's to make sure that comics adhered to a very strict code of morals and values--this came about largely because of fears of industry regulation due to the uproar caused by an "expose" of comics entitled Seduction of the Innocent. The CCA, or the Code, has become significantly more permissive in recent years, and has significantly less clout than it once did. You may still find their stamp of approval on the cover of many comics, however.

Continuity: Making the events of a comic fit in with the events of other issues of the comic; making sure that characters, backgrounds, settings, etc., are consistent (just as they would be in the real world). Many fans are very aware of continuity, and spend a lot of time looking for comics stories that seem to violate continuity. The older a title is, the more continuity it has--and the more likely an author will either intentionally or accidentally violate that continuity if he doesn't have a perfect memory of everything that's happened in that character's adventures before.

Crossover: A story that features characters from another title appearing as guest-stars. Some crossovers are just guest-starring appearances, while some of them actually begin in one book and continue into another. Some series, such as ***Infinity Gauntlet*** and ***War of the Gods***, feature a great many crossovers in addition to the regular series.

Dark Knight Format: Prestige Format or Bookshelf Format; the squarebound, high-quality format first used by DC for ***Dark Knight*** #1.

Deluxe Format: DC uses this name to indicate its Baxter-book line of 32-page comics on better quality paper. Other publishers interpret this to be the same as Bookshelf Format or Prestige Format or Dark Knight Format--my, this industry loves names, doesn't it?

Die-Cut: Using a metal die to cut away a selected area of a cover; this can be use for a variety of effects, such as the "clawed cover" of ***Wolverine #50*** or the bullet-holes of ***Punisher: War Zone #1.***

Direct Distribution: Comics that are sold directly to specialty distributors for resale to specialty shops, which sell those books to fans who are tired of haunting the local convenience stores. This system is "direct" because the unsold books cannot be returned by the stores if they aren't sold, making it a direct sale for the publisher; also, this system tends to leave out some middleman steps, getting the books to your comics specialty shop very quickly. Phil Seuling is generally credited with creating the framework for today's direct market--a market that makes it possible for you to read this ***CSN Collector's Guide,*** among other things.

Duotone: Black plus one other color, used as an accent color. Millennium's Nosferatu title is one example of duotone.

Enhancements: The use of extras such as multiple cover, foil embossing, die-cutting, metallic inks, trading cards, pop-ups, etc., to increase fan interest.

Fair: See our comics grading guide elsewhere in this issue for more information; basically, this is a book showing a fair amount of wear, but still readable and complete.

Fanzine: A fan magazine; this is where a lot of today's pros got their early starts. Usually, fanzines are not comics, but are *about* comics.

Fill-In: An issue of a book done by some creative team other than the regular team; also, an issue of a comic book that does not fit in to regular story continuity. Many companies keep fill-in stories on hand just in case someone misses a deadline and doesn't finish an issue of a comic book in time.

Fine: See our Comics Grading Guide for more information; this is a book that is in very desirable condition, but having slight signs of wear.

First Printing: The original edition of a comic book. Some successful titles are reprinted, but the first printing is the most desirable. To make sure that fans can tell first printings from later printings, many publishers use different ink colors on the covers of their later printings.

Flaking: A problem with some older comics, particularly early Marvels; small pieces of the outer edge of the cover tend to chip or flake off. This can also happen to older books that have turned brittle with age.

Flexograph: A printing method that uses flexible printing plates rather than the more rigid plastic or metal plates; it's rumored that Flexograph printing was originally used for grocery store bags, and some wits claim that originally, the printing quality looked like it. Flexograph has improved in quality a great deal in recent years, however; many fans can't tell the difference between a flexograph and a letterpress book.

Foil embossing: the application of a metallic foil on a printed image to create an eye-catching design. ***Silver Sable #1*** made use of silver foil to enhance the title character's costume, for example.

Four-color: The way most comics are printed. Virtually every color you see on a comic book page is a combination of only four colors of ink: yellow, red, blue, and black. When all you can work with is the basic four plus a limited number of combinations, you have to be pretty imaginative--that's why colorists are in such demand in the comics field. Occasionally, a publisher will use an extra color of ink: ***Cage #1*** from Marvel, used silver ink on its first issue, for example. (Fluorescent inks, glow-in-the-dark inks, and foil stamped designs are also used on occasion to add variety to a cover.)

Golden Age: The first great period of comics, usually considered to run from 1938 to the last year or so of the 1940's.

Good: See our Comics Grading Guide in this issue for more information; this is acceptable condition, showing a moderate amount of wear, but still solid and complete.

Graphic Album: a larger book presenting several comic-format stories in one collection. These may be individual stories, or they may be one long story. Usually, a graphic album has higher production values than a comic book.

Graphic Novel: a full-length story printed in graphic album format; usually a graphic novel is an original story, whereas graphic albums are often reprintings. Since many publishers use these terms interchangeably, though, you have our permission to be confused.

HC: Hardcover, usually clothbound (but not always--sometimes hardcover books use pressed cardboard covers with coated paper binding, while some deluxe books are actually leatherbound).

Horizontal Trade Paperback: This a trade paperback that is much wider than it is tall (usually used for strip reprints, since comic strips are published in a horizontal format).

ID: Books that are distributed through the non-specialty distribution system just like most magazines; ID copies often have a UPC code (that pattern of lines found in the lower left-hand corner of comics and on the back of virtually every grocery item in the known universe). These books usually go on sale later than the comics you find in your friendly neighborhood comics shop.

Illustrated Novel: A text novel that has a number of illustrations; this is not a comic book, although often comic illustrators are used to do the art for illustrated novels.

Independent: a comics company that does not distribute its books via the ID system, but relies on the comics specialty market direct distribution system or some other alternative system. Originally, independent publishers were thought of as small, second-class publishers, but the incredible growth of such independent companies as Dark Horse proves otherwise.

Inker: the person who finishes the pencilled artwork, often adding details, background, and other elements to the work; virtually every inker has his own style, and different inkers can give the same penciller's work a very different style. The inker is *not* the colorist (this is a common mistake among novice comics fans).

Issue: the number of a comic book, usually found on the front cover. Comics are generally designated by issue numbers, not by publishing dates.

Layouts: Basic page designs, done in rough pencilled format by an artist who leaves the finished pencils to be completed by someone else.

Letterer: This is the person who adds the word balloons, complete with dialogue, and the sound effects to a comic book. It's nowhere nearly as easy as some people think--and nothing can ruin an otherwise-good-looking comic quicker than bad lettering.

Licensed Book: A comic that uses titles, concepts, or characters from another source (usually a film adaptation). Licensed books have become phenomenally popular in recent years, with such titles as ***Aliens, Predator, RoboCop, Lost In Space,*** and ***Doc Savage*** being licensed from film, television, and pulp adventure source material.

Limited Edition: A book with a set number of copies available; in some cases, each copy is numbered, making it a numbered limited edition; in some cases, each copy is signed by one or more creators, making it a signed limited edition. Because the number of available copies is limited, a limited edition usually sells for more money, sells out quickly, and increases in value.

Limited Series: a comic book series with a predetermined number of issues; if it's six-issues or less, it's often called a mini-series, whereas eight, ten, or twelve issue limited series are often called maxi-series. Prior to the past decade, books with four or six issues were usually called failures.

Mando Paper: A slightly whiter grade of newsprint used on some comics. Mando paper usually makes the colors more bright and holds the ink a little bit better than newsprint.

Manga: Japanese comics; thanks to Viz and Dark Horse, American comics fans now have the opportunity to read several Japanese manga very regularly. Other comics have begun offer-

ing these reprintings of Japanese comics as well. Manga tend to have less action per 32-page issue than American comics, but that's because the Japanese don't think in terms of 32 page issues; their comics tend to be much longer than American books.

Maxi-Series: See Limited Series.

Mini-Series: See Limited Series.

Mint: A perfect condition comic book; a mint book looks like it just came off the stands--sometimes even better, since many of the books you find on the stands aren't really mint. (See the Comics Grading Guide for more information).

Mylar: A very inert plastic compound used for some comics bags; mylar doesn't yellow and is more stable than most plastics--but it also costs more.

Near-Mint: Almost perfect condition, with only the most minor and insignificant of defects (see the Comics Grading Guide for more info).

Newsprint: the standard pulp-based paper that most major comics companies print their books on; newsprint yellows quickly, is fairly porous, and often turns brittle with age--but remember, when the publishers first started doing comics on this stuff, they really didn't think we'd all be collecting this stuff years later.

One-Shot: A single-issue title; the shortest mini-series of all.

Original Art: The actual pieces of art done by the penciller and inker that are reproduced in the comic book. Many collectors like to own pieces of original art from their favorite comics--and many comics artists make their art available for sale for just this reason.

Penciller: The creator who does the pencilled illustrations for the comic book, which he may render in ink himself or he may turn over to another person to ink.

Plotter: The creator who comes up with the basic plot idea--but not the finished dialogue.

Polybagged: A pre-bagged comic; some publishers release certain books in factory-sealed plastic bags; in many cases, these books are most valuable when left still sealed in the original bag.

Polyethylene & Polypropylene: Two common types of plastics used in inexpensive comics storage bags. Polypropylene is somewhat brighter and more eye-catching, while polyethylene is a bit more translucent. Both plastics are acceptable for comics storage, although each has a tendency to yellow or deteriorate with age, and neither is as stable or protective as Mylar.

Poor: Not really collectible at all, this is a very worn and damaged copy of a book that is complete--but that's about all you can say for it. See the Comics Grading Guide for more information.

Portfolio: A collection of several higher-quality art prints offered as works of art; most portfolios are full-page illustrations, usually offering higher-quality artwork and better printing quality. Some portfolios are signed or numbered.

Poster: a mass-produced larger drawing, usually sold at a fairly low price. Don't confuse a poster with a print.

Prestige Format: The most common name for the high-quality format also known as the Dark Knight format (why can't these guys agree?).

Print: A higher-quality art reproduction, usually sold individually. Prints are done on better paper than posters, using better printing methods, and as a result generally cost more. A few publishers are offering special artist-quality types of prints, such as collographs and serigraphs. Some less-than-scrupulous publishers use the term "print" when they mean "poster," though.

Scripter: The creator who writes the more detailed story and dialogue for a comic based on someone else's plot idea.

Series-Within-A-Series: A mini-series that is published as part of an ongoing series; for example, ***Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #6-10*** encompass a series subtitled Batman: Gothic, with ***Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #6*** serving as the first issue of the mini-series, etc.

Silver Age: The renaissance of comics, generally considered to begin around 1958 and last until the late 1960's. This is the time when superheroes returned to a predominant position in the comics universe.

Specialty Shop: A comics shop like the one where you got this ***CSN Collector's Guide;*** a specialty shop offers a wide range of comics and comics-related items that you can't find anywhere else.

Speculation: Buying comic books for investment purposes rather than for enjoyment; speculators are hoping they can guess what will be popular before everyone else decides they like it. Done right, speculation can be very profitable; done wrong, it can be very expensive.

Spine: The left-hand edge of a comic book, where the pages are joined together. Some spines are wraparound, meaning they consist of larger sheets folded in half and stapled, while some are squarebound, meaning they consist of smaller groups of pages glued or stapled together to form a square edge.

Spine Roll: a problem often caused by folding comics back as you read each page; The back of the spine tends to curl forward to the front of the book, making the pages no longer line up properly and causing excessive spine wear.

Story Arc: a storyline of predetermined length, usually marketed as a complete storyline on its own, that actually appears as a segment of an ongoing series. Often, various story arcs are prepared by different creators, as is common in the pages of ***Legends of the Dark Knight*** and ***Spider-Man.***

Tie-Ins: Books that contain stories that relate in some way to another series or story.

Trade Paperback: a larger paperback edition of a comic or a comics series, usually a reprint volume; some publishers use trade paperback as a synonym for graphic album, while others use it to mean a reprint volume that collects more pages than an average graphic album. No one said all these terms were always specific...

Undergrounds: Comics published by alternative smaller publishers that often deal with drugs, sex, politics, religion, or counter-culture subjects. These were very popular in the 1960's, but there are virtually no undergrounds published today.

UPC Box: See ID.

Writer: The person who plots and scripts a comic book.

A Final Word: The comics market is an experimental and often innovative field; as a result, you may find reference to various terms in the pages of ***Comic Shop News*** and other comics-related publications that you can't find in this handy glossary. If any term doesn't seem clear to you, talk to the folks at your local comic shop (the same place where you got this ***CSN Collector's Guide***); they can clarify these terms for you and making you a wiser collector.

Grading

SO HOW MUCH IS IT WORTH?

One question that all fans wonder about is "how much is this book worth?" When you're just starting to collect, the value of the books you're buying can be very important--the saying "so many books, so little money" is an all-too-true part of the beginning collector's life. (Just in case you're wondering, it's just as much a problem for the veteran collector, who finds himself craving much more expensive, harder-to-find back issues.)

Once you've decided just what it is you're going to collect, you have the problem of deciding just how much you can afford to pay. One factor that will certainly influence price is the condition of the comics you collect.

When you first started reading comics, you probably didn't bother to take care of them; they showed signs of wear at the spine, the pages got dog-eared, you may have even written your name in the book or rolled it up to put it in your pocket. When you were just buying a book to read and then throw away, all this was fine. As a collector, though, you're looking at comics totally differently.

No one wants to buy a car with a dent in it unless the price is low enough to make it worth taking the damaged car instead of an undamaged one. It's the same with comic books: everyone wants comic books that are ***mint,*** or in perfect condition. In coin-collecting lingo, from which we borrow the term ***"mint,"*** the word means "a coin that has just come from the mint and is uncirculated." For all intents and purposes, that is what a mint comic is: a book that is uncirculated (virtually), in the same shape that it was in the day it went on the rack. Don't let people tell you that a book is "mint for its age." ***Mint*** is an absolute term--it means ***perfect in every way,*** and the grade doesn't lower its standards for older books. That's why older books are so valuable in mint condition--it's so very, very hard to find them in that shape. Currently, mint copies of Golden Age and key Silver Age books are considered very desirable because these books are very old and predate organized comic collecting (which means that no one anticipated the value this books would accrue). Some mint books go for many times the ***Overstreet Price Guide***-listed price because of their rarity in that condition.

For all intents and purposes, most collectors' comics are graded between ***fine*** and ***near-mint.*** ***Near-mint*** is just what it says: almost, but not quite, mint. It may show very, very slight signs of reading--but not signs of wear. It may be a little less glossy, or it may show its age a little bit.

A ***fine*** condition book shows a few signs of wear, but they have to be very minor. For the uninitiated, a fine condition book looks "like new." A comics collector will notice the little bit of wear on the spine or the outer edge, a little rounding of the outside corners, etc. This is still a very, very good grade of book, and for many collectors, ***fine*** is a perfect compromise in the battle between perfect condition and cheap price.

Very good is a bit lower in grade than fine. A very good book is complete, solid, and very presentable, but it has some signs of wear. A very good book will not have any tears in the cover, missing staples, rolled spine, or writing on the cover, however. Very minor spine wear, a little minor scuffing, stress lines, etc, are very common on very good books.

A ***good*** book is just that: it's good, but it's not great. A good book is complete, all the pages and the cover are attached and are tight, there are no rips in the book and no pieces missing, but it's probably less glossy, showing more wear and age than a fine book. Good books are the books you often find at flea markets and relatives' attics; they've been read and they show it, but they're still complete, solid, and readable. A good book should have interior pages without extreme yellowing, and it shouldn't have a strong musty or moldy odor; these smells are signs that the book has begun to deteriorate. (Unfortunately, many new collectors assume that if everything is there, a book is mint; as a result, novice collectors often overrate the condition of their comics. Good is a very common condition in which older comics are found--in fact, it's very hard to find older books in significantly better grades than this.)

Fair condition books are about as low as a collector wants to go. These books are pretty rough copies. They may have some minor tears in the cover; some of the interior pages may be torn or worn (but no pages can be missing). There may even be some small pieces of the cover or outer edges of the pages missing from wear, some dirt or grime on the cover, and some obvious spine rolling, but the book is still complete and readable. This is not the kind of book you'll rush out to show your friends once you acquire it, but it will allow you to have a valuable book in your collection at a less-than-valuable price.

Poor condition books are poor, and that's all there is to it. This is the kind of book you'd think twice about owning at any price. It may have a great deal of writing on the cover or interiors; it may have large tears or holes in the book; it may have bad wear on the cover that actually obliterates segments of the cover; it may be separated at the spine. A poor condition book should have all its pages unless otherwise noted, but that's about all it has going for it.

What happens, all too often, is that a collector bases the value of his collection on the ***mint*** value of the books, but he buys only ***good*** or ***very good*** condition books. Don't fool yourself. If you want to have a collection that's very desirable, buy near-mint or better books; it will cost you a great deal, but you will have books in very collectible condition.

If you're ***not*** planning to resell your collection, however--and many fans don't, since they're collecting for enjoyment rather than investment--you may be perfectly satisfied with good or very good condition copies. Some collectors even focus on fair condition copies, which sometimes sell for as little as 10% the value of a mint-condition book. Collectors have been known to build entire runs of fair-condition books for a fraction of the cost of the more desirable runs. This is fine if you're collecting to read; if you hope to recoup your investment plus a healthy profit later on, though, you really should consider anything less than very good unacceptable.

Don't just assume that any ***new book*** you buy is necessarily a ***mint*** book, either; since comics are often shipped in string-tied bundles, in boxes, it's possible for some copies of books to show "string-wear" (creases or lines caused by the string cutting into the top or bottom copies), box damage (a staple in the box may cause a dent or puncture in the book, or the box may have been dropped on a corner, resulting in minor corner bends), or some rolling of the spine (caused by careless lifting of the bundles by the string, making the books roll inward).

There may also be printing defects in the book; the cover may be miscut, or the color may not line up perfectly. Watch for this sort of defect, also; no matter how much care you take with your collection, if the book wasn't really mint when you bought it, it never will be.

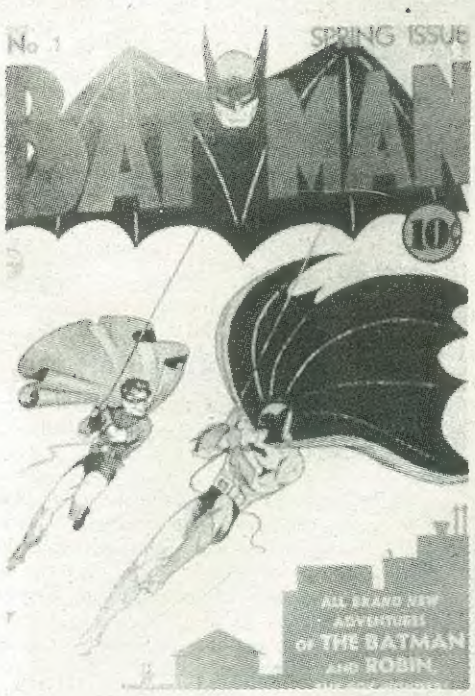
History

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Comics have been praised by famous author Harlan Ellison as "one of the five uniquely American art forms." If you're interested enough in collecting to have picked up this ***CSN Collectors' Guide,*** you might be interested in how comics began.

We can thank William Randolph Hearst, famous journalist and publisher, for the basic idea of comics; it was Hearst who created the idea of a book reprinting comic strips in the early 1900's. That's what the first comic books were--strip reprints. It was a while before anyone thought about collecting new stories into comic book form.

In 1933, a few special giveaway comics were published; the response for these strip reprints was so tremendous that Max Gaines decided to risk publishing a comic book for sale on the newsstands. He priced his comic book at a dime, the price of many of the popular pulp magazines of that era, and so ***Famous Funnies*** was born in 1934 from Dell Comics, the first actual comics publishing company.



DC--or the company we now know as DC--entered the comics game in 1935, when National Periodical Publications released ***New Fun #1.*** It would be two more years before DC would publish the title that gave it its DC name: ***Detective Comics.***

Walt Disney came to comics in 1935 as well, and the comics boom was underway. Before the end of the decades, many publishers who had been involved with pulp fiction were making the move to the new and fast-growing comics industry, and it seemed like there were more titles coming out every month.

In 1938, DC turned the comics industry upside down with the release of the first superhero story in ***Action Comics #1.*** This superhero was, of course, Superman, and he changed the direction of comics forever; it's hard to believe that his creators, Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster, actually had trouble finding a home for their creation!

A year later, Marvel published its first title, ***Marvel Comics #1,*** a book that introduced some of Marvel's most famous characters, including the Human Torch and Sub-Mariner. At the time, Marvel published under the name of Timely Comics, but some of the characters--Sub-Mariner, Human Torch, and (later on) Captain America--are very familiar to Marvel readers.

1939 also saw the introduction of Bob Kane's ***Batman,*** who was joined a year later by the first teenage sidekick, Robin the Boy Wonder. The line-up of classic heroes was quickly becoming complete.

Captain Marvel debuted from Fawcett in 1940, the same year two pulp heroes, ***Shadow*** and ***Doc Savage,*** made the move to comics. These guys obviously knew where the action was...

World War II was great for the comics industry; suddenly, comics had some real villains, and the war led to the creation of more heroes than most readers can imagine. A few other non-superhero concepts came to life during the war as well--most notably Archie, brought to comics in 1942.

After the war, superhero comics gradually declined; by the end of the decade, most publishers were getting out of the superhero publishing field. For many companies, war, westerns, romance, humor, adventure, horror, suspense, and science fiction was the up-and-coming field.

In 1950, William M. Gaines, son of comics pioneer Max Gaines, began publishing a series of classic horror, suspense, sf, war, and adventure comics under the EC imprint. Until the furor that arose because of Fredric Wertham's ***Seduction of the Innocent,*** EC was the king of the non-hero comics field.

1953 was a bad year for superheroes; not only had most superhero books been discontinued, but one hero who had continued after the war years, Captain Marvel, was defeated by Superman in a legal battle that never actually concluded--Fawcett, the publisher of ***Captain Marvel,*** merely gave up rather than lose a copyright infringement lawsuit. Superman was triumphant, but it was a pretty lonely victory. The superhero field was steadily losing its audience, and even books like ***Captain America*** were converting from superhero to horror/mystery storylines.

In 1954, Wertham's ***Seduction of the Innocent*** brought new and unwanted attention to the comics industry as a major source of America's juvenile delinquency problem. Wertham never adequately proved his charge--but he didn't have to, since the accusation itself led the Senate to investigate the industry and bring about major changes in the comics field.

By the end of 1954, the Comics Code Authority was created, and the predominant publisher of horror/sf comics, EC, saw the writing on the wall. While the company tried to adapt to the coming changes in comics, the attempts were unsuccessful, and within a year, all EC books except ***Mad*** would be out of business.

For the next couple of years, comics seemed to be in the doldrums. Marvel made an unsuccessful attempt or two to revive some of its heroes, but these revivals were unsuccessful and short-lived. In 1956, however, DC tried in experiment in a title devoted to experiments: ***Showcase.*** In the fourth issue, they presented an updated version of a classic Golden Age hero, the ***Flash.*** After a few more experimental ***Showcase*** issues, DC decided the time was right for a new superhero, and Flash returned to his own book. For most fans, his return heralds the beginning of the Silver Age of comics (even though there were a few new heroes created before the Flash's return, such as J'onn J'onnz, none of them equalled the Scarlet Speedster's impact on the field).

DC dominated the superhero market for a few

years, until Martin Goodman at Marvel noticed their success and decided to try returning Marvel to the superhero fold. In 1961, ***Fantastic Four #1*** debuted from the creative team of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, followed in short order by ***The Hulk, The Amazing Spider-Man,*** and many other Marvel titles. Using a relatively small group of creators (including Lee, Kirby, Steve Ditko, Dick Ayers, Don Heck, and Joe Sinnott, among others), Marvel established a strong company personality that was then lacking at DC, letting fans feel that they knew the comics creators almost as well as they knew the heroes themselves. Even companies like Charlton and Gold Key experimented with superheroes, introducing such characters as Captain Atom, Magnus, and Solar.

In 1965, Jim Warren decided that there was still a market for well-done horror stories written and drawn by some of the best in the comics industry, and ***Creepy*** and ***Eerie*** magazines were created, using such talents as Williamson, Wood, Frazetta, Morrow, Torres, Orlando, and others--many of whom had worked for EC years before. The Warren magazines recaptured a lot of the style and appearance of the better EC's, and helped pave the way for the return of horror to comics.

The comics market continued to grow in the 1960's, with companies such as Archie, Tower, ACG, and others turning their attention towards superheroes.

Meanwhile, in 1967, the first underground comic, ***Zap,*** was created, giving a comic book voice to the counterculture movement. A new breed of comics creators, offering experimental artwork and untraditional, often adult storylines, created comics for fans who were looking for something more than superheroes and horror. These creators have greatly influenced the comics market today.

Comics' popularity crested again in the late 1960's, and the 1970's were a period of experimentation and slight decline. Comics companies expanded into magazines and digests with some success, but audiences decreased to the point that some creators foresaw the end of the comics industry by the 1980's.

What turned the industry around? Most agree it was the direct distribution system, created by Phil Seuling in the 1970's. This system allowed a series of comics specialty shops to develop across the country, catering the the tastes and interest of a dedicated comics audience. The shop where you picked up this ***CSN Collector's Guide*** exists because of Seuling's direct distribution system.

In 1975, Marvel and DC united efforts to publish the first of several joint books, including a ***Superman-Spider-man*** team-up and, later on, a ***Teen Titans-X-Men*** team-up.

In 1978, DC underwent a dramatic cutback often referred to as "the DC Implosion." While things looked bad for the comics industry, a comics newcomer, Eclipse, published its first graphic novel.

In the early 1980's, the independent market began to develop. Several publishers, most notably Dave Sim's Aardvark-Vanaheim and Richard and Wendy Pini's WaRP, had published some independent titles in the 1970's, but the 1980's saw the market explode. This came about largely because of the direct-market distribution system; new publishers now had a way to get their books into comic shops all over the country. Previously, new publishers faced a difficult struggle to place their comic books on the newsstands; now, anyone could put together a book and get it to the fans most likely to buy it.

After such an explosion there was bound to be a decline. Some companies that were born in this time survived to do very well; other companies, like Capital and Pacific, collapsed as the initial enthusiasm for independent comics waned. (Ironically, one of Pacific Comics' fill-in features, a 1930s-ish back up story by Dave Stevens called ***The Rocketeer,*** became one of 1991's big-budget films--with creator Stevens involved as an executive producer.)

1982 saw major publishers move into the graphic novel format; meanwhile, Eclipse, which had already established itself as a graphic novel publisher, moved into periodicals with ***Eclipse Magazine,*** which would lead to the Eclipse line of comic books.

In 1983, a new wave of publishers came into the field; meanwhile, publishers like Marvel and DC began to work to develop the high-quality formats they had ventured into the year before. Graphic albums and Baxter series became best-sellers. New companies continued to add new titles, and the growth of the independent market continued through the end of that year and on into 1984 and 1985. Some very small companies rose to fame at this time--companies like Mirage Press, which released the small-printing first issue of ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*** only to discover their comic was a fan favorite that gradually led to a line of toys, animated television shows, films, and more.

During this time period, companies like First, Eclipse, and Comico--companies which had began as small independents--took advantage of a growing market for well-done comics material to become major, established publishers in the new comics specialty market.

The independent market reached its peak in 1986, when the black-and-white explosion came into being. Dozens of new black-and-white titles were created by dozens of new companies every month, and it seemed that all of them were successful.

That success was short-lived, however, as the support for the black-and-white market waned later in 1986, causing the collapse of many of the companies who had ridden the wave of success. While a number of the companies you will read about in this ***CSN Collector's Guide*** began before the black and white collapse and managed to survive it, there were dozens of others that simply disappeared.

In 1986, Marvel created its New Universe; DC recreated its old Universe by destroying much of it in ***Crisis on Infinite Earths*** and altering a major part of it in the ***Man of Steel*** miniseries that allowed John Byrne to recreate Superman. DC's recreation of its old Universe was relatively successful; Marvel's New Universe was, unfortunately, a flop, and the books faded away a few years later.

The past six years have seen an incredible growth in expensive comics items--graphic novels, trade paperbacks, prestige-format comics, hardcovers, and limited editions--and a regrowth of the independent market after the black-and-white market collapse of 1986.

The current comics market features more titles (in more price ranges) than fans have seen in years; at the same time, many companies are struggling because of the dominant status of a few key companies like Marvel and DC. Independent sales seem to be declining, and some independent publishers (like Eclipse) are moving away from standard comics towards trade paperbacks, graphic novels, and prestige-format limited series.

One of the small black-and-white publishers of the 1986 boom period, Dark Horse Comics, has grown into a major player in the comics field; Dark Horse has had phenomenal success both with licensed properties (such as ***Terminator, Aliens, James Bond, RoboCop,*** and ***Predator)*** and creator-owned series (such as ***Sin City*** (appearing in ***Dark Horse Presents)*** and ***The American***).

Fans have been blessed with an enormous number of reprint volumes making some of the most expensive comics available in affordable editions. Key Golden Age issues of ***Detective Comics, Superman,*** and ***Captain America*** have been reprinted at a fraction of the cost of the original issues. Both companies have also offered numerous reprints of successful Silver age and more recent projects.

The incredible popularity of ***Batman*** in 1989 and the phenomenal success of Todd McFarlane's ***Spider-Man*** in 1990 were followed in 1991 by two record-setting comics: ***X-Force #1,*** with 3.6 million copies sold, and ***X-Men #1,*** with sales of slightly more than seven million copies! ***Batman Returns,*** the 1992 hit film, has spawned a new line of Batman graphic novels, one-shots, and miniseries, but it hasn't duplicated the Batmania of 1989.

1992 was a record-setting year for the independent comics market; a group of creators well-known for their work at Marvel set out to create their own comics line. Image Comics, published by Malibu, was the result. Major names like Rob Liefeld, Todd McFarlane, Erik Larsen, Jim Lee, Whilce Portacio, Jim Valentino, Marc Silvestri, and Dale Keown left very popular titles from Marvel Comics to create their own heroes for the new company. Liefeld's ***Youngblood #1*** sold over 800,000 copies, setting a record for sales from any modern company other than Marvel or DC; a month later, Todd McFarlane's ***Spawn #1*** shattered that record with sales of over 1.7 million. Image's influence on the comics market is just beginning to be felt, but many feel it is likely that other popular creators will form their own publishing companies to control their own comics creations. Marvel sales were not dramatically affected by the departure of these talents, adding credence to Marvel's belief that their characters, not their creators, sold their comics.

Valiant Comics, created in 1991 by Jim Shooter and Bob Layton, escalated in popularity due to the success of their Unity crossover series.

Valiant seems to be well on its way to becoming the third big superhero company, following Marvel and DC; unlike Image, whose line is built primarily on miniseries, Valiant's line will include nine ongoing superhero titles by the end of 1992.

And now, let's take a look at what's happening in the comics field today. In the upcoming pages, *CSN* will give you information on the background and history on some of the major comics companies, as well as some insights into what directions these companies are moving in later on this year. After each entry, we'll give you a list of some of that company's hottest titles, so you can check them out.

How to Collect

Collecting is very simple to get into; all you have to do is save the books you buy and try to keep them in the best possible condition. If you're doing that, you're a collector, whether you thought of it that way or not.

A lot of people think collectors are readers who spend hundreds or thousands of dollars acquiring back issues to fill in holes in their collections. That's not necessarily the case. While some collectors try to get all the issues of a particular title, paying hundreds or thousands of dollars for rare books, some collectors maintain a very tight budget and never pay more than $5 or $10 for any book in their collections. Some collectors don't buy back issues at all, preferring instead just to collect new books they can buy at their local comics shop.

THE BASICS

If you're going to collect, you need to decide what it is you want to collect. That sounds simpler than it is, because you need to be realistic about your budget if you want to enjoy your collection without driving yourself broke in the process.

Most collectors prefer to collect by title; that is, they collect one particular title (like ***X-Men*** or ***Justice League International*** or ***Spirit***) and try to get every issue of that title, plus any annuals, special issues, or graphic novels that are published under that title. This way, you're sure you're getting a book you'll enjoy.

Some collectors go further and collect by character; they might not only buy every ***Punisher*** comic published under that title, they might also make a point of getting every book that ***Punisher*** appears in. Again, you're reading material about a character you like, so you're probably going to enjoy your collection--and you might get exposed to some other titles you might enjoy in the process, if they happen to have crossovers with the character you collect.

S me people collect by ***artist or writer***; that is, they might buy every book that Rick Leonardi draws, or every book that Peter David writes. This is particularly intriguing for the collector who enjoys the art of comics as much or more than the characters themselves; it allows a collector to see how a creator has developed over the years, and exposes the collector to a variety of characters and concepts that the creator has done.

A few collectors try to collect all the books of a particular company; unless you choose a very small company, this can get very expensive very quickly. Also, remember that "company identity" means a lot less than it did a decade or two ago; the same creators whose work you enjoy at Marvel may also be working for Eclipse, Fantagraphics, or Millennium at the same time, and you might miss out on some material you'd really like just because it didn't have the right corporate name on the cover.

A few collectors make a point of collecting every first issue published. Again, this can get ***very*** expensive. Furthermore, while the idea is a noble one--it will expose you to every book being published, and you will know what everyone is doing--it can also fill your collection with a lot of books you don't enjoy while burdening your budget. If you can afford it, buying all first issues is fine; if you're having to live within your means like most of us, though, you might ask the friendly folks at your comics shop to help you decide what first issues are likely to appeal to you and what first issues aren't. They keep up with what's being published, and if you can tell them what you like, they can help you find new books that are likely to match your interests.

Some collectors specialize in a time period, collecting all books from a particular decade. Some collectors specialize in certain genres of books, collecting all horror books or all westerns or all 3-D books.

What do you want to do? If you enjoy reading about your favorite characters, you'll probably want to collect by titles or characters. If you want to follow an artist or writer, collect that way. But remember one thing--a collection has to be something you enjoy. If you're buying a lot of material you don't like, the odds are much higher that the people you hope to sell your collection to later on won't like it, either.

COLLECTING FOR INVESTMENT

Comics certainly make great investments--there's no denying that. We've all heard stories of the collector who sold his first issue of ***Captain Zippybash*** for $5000, or the collector who traded his collection for a place on the beach in Malibu. Remember, though, that deals like that make the news because they're rare. If every collector sold his collection for megabucks, you wouldn't hear about it because it wouldn't be news.

This is a ***Comic Shop News Collectors' Guide,*** not an Investors' Guide; we're not going to tell you that you should buy multiple copies of books, that you should invest heavily in appreciating back issues, or that you should buy things you don't like because they're likely to be expensive later on.

We spend a lot of time telling you what's hot in this ***Guide***; there's a reason for that. If a book is hot, that means that a lot of people collecting comics are enjoying it enough to buy it. If all those thousands upon thousands of collectors are enjoying a title (thereby making it hot), the odds are greater that you'll enjoy it as well. These are not books that we think are necessarily great investments for maximum dollar return in minimum time--but they are books you're likely to enjoy reading, and they're books that are likely to have an avid following.

Remember the basic rule of investing: you're trying to buy at a cheap price something that someone else will want badly enough to pay a high price for later on. That someone else is probably *not* going to be your comics shop; the shop is in the comics business, and if a book is truly likely to be valuable a few months down the line, the comics shop will probably be more aware of it than you are, and they're probably ***already*** backstocking copies of it.

If you ***have*** to invest, then you might ask your local shop owner what books he or she is backstocking heavily. These are books the shop is willing to risk its own money on, so you can use that as a guide. Remember, though, that if your local comic shop is backstocking a large quantity of these comics, the odds are that you won't be able to sell your comics to that shop later on.

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

You've decided that you're going to collect, and you know what you're going to collect. Now, let's talk about how to collect it.

Simple. You buy what you need to fill in your collection.

That's all we'd have to tell you if everyone was independently wealthy. If you're still reading this, we assume you aren't wealthy, so we'll give you a few tips on how to fill out your collection.

RULE #1: Never pass up cover-price new comics to buy back issues. Never ever.

Remember, once that book you passed up at cover price sells out, you'll be paying back-issue prices for it. Many books jump in price by 50%-100% as soon as they're no longer available as new books--then they don't increase in value again for a long, long time. If you pass on a cover-price ***X-O Manowar*** to buy last month's issue at $3, there's a chance that the next time you go into your local comics shop, they'll be sold out of the cover-price new issue of ***X-9 Manowar*** (after all, we all know how hot that book is) and will only have it at $3--while the last month's issue is probably still selling for $3.

Of course, there can be exceptions here--if you find a back issue at such a bargain price that you know it won't be there next week, or if it's a book you've been wanting forever, then go ahead. But a wise collector tries to budget enough for new comics and for back issues.

RULE TWO: Make a back issue plan and stick with it.

Don't buy back issues at random unless a title is new enough that there aren't that many back issues to buy. Many collectors try to work in 20-issue lumps, trying to fill in 20 issues back from their oldest issue. If you have all the issues of ***Cerebus*** from 80 on up and you were using this system, you'd try to buy any reasonably-priced ***Cerebus*** issues you find between 60 and 80. If you collect this way, you're more likely to understand what's happening in the comics you've bought, and you're also more likely to find the books you want. Each 20-issue-increment will get harder to find than the 20-issue-increment before it, but it'll be gradual. Also, you tend to fill in holes in your collection with less expensive books first, then you buy the more expensive ones later on, when you might have more money. (For most folks, income increases with age...)

Some collectors prefer to do just the opposite; they try to buy the early issues first, then work their way up. Even then, they find it best to work in 20-issue increments; that way, they get entire stories that they can actually read and enjoy.

RULE THREE: If a bargain hits you in the head, forget rule one and two.

Let's be honest here; any plan has to be flexible. If you find a first printing of ***Neat Stuff #1*** for a buck or two and you pass it up because you're only collecting the last five issues of ***Neat Stuff*** right now, you need to rethink your collecting policy. A bargain isn't likely to be there forever, so grab it while you can.

RULE FOUR: Evaluate your collection periodically.

Last month, it would have cost you over $2000 to buy one copy of every comic, graphic novel, and trade paperback published. Most people can't afford that. That's why you limit your collection in some way.

There are a lot of good books competing for your collecting dollar. If you keep buying books you no longer enjoy, you may be missing some great stuff being published out there. Remember with $2000 worth of stuff a month being published, there's probably some great comics that you'd love--if you just had the money to try them.

Periodically, look over what you're collecting. If you're not enjoying those titles as much as you used to, start looking at the comics racks and see if there's something else there that you might enjoy more. A collection isn't a lifetime commitment--if you're getting tired of a book, drop it for a while and try something else.

RULE FIVE: If you aren't taking care of your collection, you don't have a collection--just an accumulation.

The best way to keep your collection valuable is to take care of it. There are a few comics-collecting basic supplies here that will enable you to do just that.

First off, ***bag your collection.*** You don't have to have a single bag for every book; you can put two in a bag, back-to-back, and still see the covers to each. If you're on a real budget, then you can put runs of five or ten books in one bag--but you might want to put a label on your bag to tell you just what's there.

Why should you bag your collection? It won't stop your books from aging--but it will help to keep insects and the elements out. A number of household insect pests have an avid appetite for the exact same paper you find in comic books--but they don't seem to enjoy plastic nearly as much. The most common form of damage to comics collections is water damage--and again, the bags can help keep the water and your favorite comics from meeting one another.

Comic bags ***aren't*** airtight, however, so don't think that bagging your collection will permanently halt the aging process--it won't work.

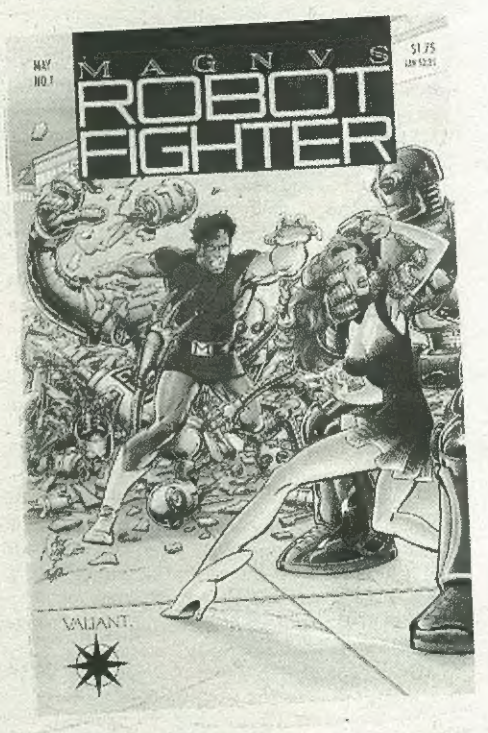
Oddly enough, the most expensive mylar bags are, in some ways, the least protective. Most mylar bags don't seal at the top, thereby eliminating most of the pest-protection aspects of the bag. Even worse, some collectors actually damage their books on the stiff mylar bag itself.

Certainly, mylar is a more stable material than the plastic used in standard comics bags--but it's expensive and, as we've said, it can actually contribute to damage of your comics. If you want to use mylar material, mylites (thinner, flexible bags made of lighter-weight mylar) might be a good compromise--and they do allow you to tape-seal your bags.

Once you've bagged your collection, get rid of the old grocery store boxes you've been storing your books in and buy some comic book boxes from your local comics shop. Comic book boxes help you protect your collection; first, they're designed to be just wide enough for your comics, thereby reducing the damage caused by books sliding across each other in a too-wide box. Second, if you fill your box adequately, the box and the books in the box work together to support your comics, keeping them flat and cutting down on the air-flow around the books.

Don't under-fill a comics box; it's better to have it a little bit snug than it is to have the books so loose that the books can slump down and bend inwards due to the slack in the box.

If you don't buy a large number of comics each week, you might want to keep your collection in short (or halfsized) comics boxes; this way, it's easier for your to fill a box. If you buy large num-



Which of thesewill be worththe most in 10 years? The answer (which we'll all learn together in 10 years) may surprise you.

bers of books, you may want to buy full-sized boxes--but measure the space you're going to store your collection in to make sure it's deep enough to take the full-length boxes.

KNOWING WHAT YOU HAVE

If you don't have an indexing system, you may want to develop one. It'll make it easy for you to know what you have--and it'll help you avoid buying the same books more than once.

Many comics shops sell index cards or index sheets for comics, but you can make your own index sheet easily enough. All you need is a typewriter and access to a photocopying machine.

Collectors' index cards are very handy because they're smaller, but many collectors prefer to use full-sized index pages and make out a wantlist of books they're looking for.

Now you have the basics; if you're a comics collector, you're ready to move on to the part everyone wants to read about--the comics themselves!

Marvel

Marvel Comics is the most successful comic book company today, publishing between 40% and 50% of the comics sold in the collector's field--but that wasn't always the case. Not only is Marvel not the *first* comics company, it has gone through periods in its history when its impact in the comics field was very minor--hard to believe when you consider the incredible impact Marvel has on comics today.

Marvel's roots in comics can be traced all the way back to 1939, when Marvel began its first title, ***Marvel Comics.*** In that initial title were the debut appearances of two of Marvel's best-known characters--the Human Torch (created by Carl Burgos) and the Sub-Mariner (created by Bill Everett). This book appeared at the very beginning of the superhero era that made up the Golden Age of Comics, and the two were soon joined by many other heroes, including The Angel, the Patriot, the Vision, The Raven, and others. It was a creation by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby that became the third major hero of the Timely era (Timely being the name Marvel published under in the beginning): ***Captain America.***

Captain America, a patriotic hero to end all patriotic heroes, quickly became one of the Big Three of Timely Comics. While Marvel/Timely published dozens of other titles, it is the ***Human Torch,*** the ***Sub-Mariner,*** and ***Captain America*** that we remember so fondly from that Golden Age era--and these are the characters who helped re-launch Marvel Comics in the early 1960's.

In the Human Torch and Sub-Mariner, Marvel/Timely had heroes representing two of the most elemental powers: the power of fire and the power of water. It was natural that the two of them should not only meet but should be enemies, as was the case in ***Marvel Mystery #8.***

In ***Captain America,*** Marvel had not only an amazingly successful comic book, but a comic that would have an indelible effect on the way comics were drawn and comics stories were told. With Simon and Kirby at the helm, the incredible action of ***Captain America*** became a comics standard, and the scope and intensity of the visual action in the book became legendary. Later in the '40's, Captain America even ventured beyond the comic book page into the realm of movie serials, with only moderate success.

Marvel/Timely even experimented with super-teams, offering not only the ***All-Winners Squad,*** featuring several of its most famous heroes, but also the ***Young Allies,*** uniting several of its younger heroes and sidekicks.

As the war ended, the superhero boom began to decline, and Marvel was particularly hard hit. As the '40's gave way to the '50's, comics readers saw more and more of Marvel's line switching over to genre fiction: horror, western, and war titles dominated the Marvel line, and even the major heroes were not invulnerable as they saw their books cancelled, or in some cases, changed; ***Captain America*** eventually became ***Captain America's Weird Tales*** before being discontinued entirely.

For Marvel in the 1950's, horror/sf/fantasy was the byword. The company published dozens of titles in these genres--some of the titles later became the home of Marvel's superheroes, with books like ***Tales of Suspense, Journey into Mystery, Tales to Astonish, Strange Tales,*** and ***Amazing Adult Fantasy*** becoming a part of Marvel's line-up.

Even in the '50's, though, Marvel experimented with superheroes to a degree. ***Sub-Mariner, the Human Torch,*** and ***Captain America*** all returned briefly in the mid-50's, and there were costumed genre heroes like ***The Two-Gun Kid,*** a western costumed hero, and Joe Maneely's ***Black Knight,*** a heroic fantasy. Most of these super-hero experiments met with little success, though; it just seemed that, for the most part, the comics-reading public in the middle 1950's was tired of predictable super-hero adventures. Marvel eventually quit trying and fell into a niche they could fill very well: monster stories, science fiction, and bizarre fantasy pieces. By the end of the 1950's, Marvel had a stable of some of the best talent in the field, with such luminaries as Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Gene Colan, Dick Ayers, Don Heck, and Joe Sinnott all working with editor/head writer Stan Lee to fill the pages of the numerous Marvel titles devoted to the horror/sf/fantasy genre.

Stan Lee and Jack Kirby still had very fond memories of superheroes, however, and when publisher Martin Goodman suggested in 1961 that the company might try a super-team again following the success of DC's ***Justice League,*** Marvel debuted its new superhero line with its first book, ***The Fantastic Four.*** The Human Torch was back--but it wasn't the same Human Torch. His three teammates also had super-powers--but unlike the DC heroes, who seemed to view their team as a lodge meeting with all their buddies, the Marvel heroes were human. They bickered; they didn't see eye to eye; at times, they even quit the team and went off on their own.

Fantastic Four #73, © 1968 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

This was the beginning of the Marvel Age of Comics, although no one seemed to know it then. Marvel had developed superheroes with problems and personalities, and comics fans found the change refreshing. Soon after the team was created, the Human Torch ran across Sub-Mariner, a victim of amnesia, living a destitute life in the Bowery. A second Timely legend returned to Marvel Comics--as a very angry villain.

Meanwhile, Stan Lee and Steve Ditko had created a new teenage hero for the last issue of ***Amazing Fantasy***--a teen who had been bitten by a radioactive spider, giving him the proportionate powers of a spider. Like many of the readers of Spider-Man, Peter Parker had personal problems, social problems, and school problems--and he had an immense following very soon after his creation and the debut of his own title.

TALES OF SUSPENSE
featuring
IRON MAN AND CAPTAIN AMERICA
BIG NEWS!
STARTING WITH THIS GREAT ISSUE!
2 BIG FEATURES
FOR THE PRICE OF ONE!
IRON MAN BATTLES THE BLACK KNIGHT!
THE SHIELD OF THE SYMBOLIC HERO CAPTAIN AMERICA

While Lee, Kirby, Ditko, and others were busy creating the basic titles of the growing Marvel Universe in the mid-60's, unleashing Iron Man, Ant-Man, Thor, the Avengers, Dr. Strange, The X-Men, and the Hulk, the third element of Marvel's Golden Age Trio appeared in the pages of ***Strange Tales #114.*** The Human Torch did battle with Captain America in that issue--and while it turned out not to be the real Captain America, it still led to the return of Steve Rogers in ***Avengers #4*** a few months later.

By the end of the 1960's, Marvel was on its way to prominence in the comics field--and a large number of new creations had been unveiled, including SHIELD, the Silver Surfer, Daredevil, Galactus, and more.

As Marvel moved into the 1970's, the company grew even more, and Stan Lee was no longer able to write virtually every Marvel title. Roy Thomas came in to assist Stan at the end of the 60's, and by the time the next decade had moved in, Marvel was using a number of talented writers and artists who had not been a part of that initial Marvel renaissance.

While the number of books that Marvel published continue to grow in the 1970's as the company ventured into horror/fantasy ***(Werewolf by Night, Frankenstein, Tomb of Dracula),*** martial arts ***(Deadly Hands of Kung-Fu, Iron Fist, Master of Kung-Fu),*** and heroic fantasy ***(Red Sonja, Kull, Conan)*** in addition to super-heroes, the company seemed to have trouble finding a direction.

Marvel's popularity continued to grow in the super-hero field, however, with the return of the ***X-Men*** to their own non-reprint title. It's hard to believe that, for a while in the early '70's, there was no new Mutants title at all--the ***X-Men*** book had actually become a reprint series because of low readership! Of course, the X-Men soon became Marvel's most popular characters; this year, they expanded into their second ongoing monthly book, and in the past fifteen years, they have given rise to a variety of spin-off titles, including ***Alpha Flight, X-Force, X-Factor, Excalibur,*** and ***Wolverine.***

In 1982, Marvel produced its first graphic novel, ***The Death of Captain Marvel.*** More graphic novels followed, some of them featuring creator-owned characters. Shortly afterwards, the Epic line was launched, and for the first time, Marvel was publishing (under the Epic imprint) comics that were creator-owned concepts.

Marvel's output continued to grow, with more graphic novels, more limited series, more Baxter and bookshelf format titles, more trade paperbacks, and more posters featuring Marvel characters.

In 1986, Marvel unveiled its New Universe--a world totally separate from the Marvel Universe. The New Universe never managed to catch on with fans, though, and it was devastated in the prestige-format miniseries ***The War.*** Marvel has learned a lesson: fans are very happy with the Marvel Universe and don't see any reason to abandon it. That's why Marvel's next "new universe" type project isn't really a new universe at all: Marvel will soon debut a massive project focused in the Marvel Universe of 2099, featuring futuristic versions of some of Marvel's most popular heroes, including Spider-Man, the Punisher, and Dr. Doom.

Spider-Man, currently celebrating his thirtieth anniversary, remains one Marvel's most popular hero. He appears in five monthly titles, two of which are almost always in Marvel's top ten sellers.

Current Editor-in-Chief Tom DeFalco has two main goals, he says: "To keep Marvel Comics the most popular, successful comics company there is, and to maintain a sense of hoohah fun in Marvel's comics."

"I started doing freelance work for Marvel in the late '70s," DeFalco said, "and started working as an editor in late 1980 or early 1981. On April 15, 1987, I became Editor-in-Chief of Marvel Comics--which is sort of funny, because that's a date I used to dread."

Being an Editor-in-Chief is a trying job, according to DeFalco: "I sit around a lot, put my feet up on the desk, smoke cigars, occasionally order pizza with sausage and pepperoni, and I glare at people every now and then. Basically, I get to read the comics first and keep everything on track. With Marvel's editors, though, I don't have to do that much more than just applaud the editors of the books--Marvel's people know what the readers want."

"Here's the truth," DeFalco revealed to *CSN*.. "They do all the work, and I get all the credit. The editors are the ones who do the actual work; they hire the creative people, they shepherd the book from a basic idea into a beautiful finished product. I talk to them in terms of general storylines, in terms of where a character is going, in terms of the members of the team. I deal with vague generalities, and they deal with very specific situations. They make all my generalities work. I oversee the line, and that's pretty much it."

"Marvel is constantly looking to expand the marketplace. We know that there are millions of people out there who would love comics if they tried them, so we want to make it easy to try them," DeFalco explained.

When asked why Marvel remains such an incredibly popular publisher, Tom DeFalco said it was a very difficult question to answer without seeming conceited. "I guess we must be doing what people want to read," he conjectured.

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Hot Picks

No mutant fan will want to be without Cable this summer--and we're not talking about teevee here! ***Cable*** is a new two-part limited series written by Fabian Nicieza and illustrated by John Romita Jr. and Dan Green. This new series pits Cable against Stryfe and Canada's current "Weapon X," and it paves the way for this fall's upcoming mutant title crossover storyline. This crossover, running through the two ***X-Men, Uncanny X-Men, X-Factor,*** and ***X-Force,*** is sure to be Marvel's biggest event of the fall; Marvel will make the books even more collectible by poly-bagging each with a bonus trading card.

The Rise of the Midnight Sons storyline running through the various Ghost Rider-related titles this summer will spawn several hot new series, including ***Morbius*** (the story of a a vampire who turns his yearning for blood into a mission of justice), ***Darkhold Redeemers,***. Along with the already-released Spirits of Vengeance #1, which gives the original Ghost Rider his own comic once again, it's a great season for Marvel's horror-hero titles.

Okay, so ***Fish Police*** wasn't the television hit that everyone had hoped it would be--that doesn't mean that it isn't a great comic book! Marvel reminds everyone just how good Steve Moncuse's original ***Fish Police*** comics were when they begin reprinting the entire run this summer--and as an added bonus, they're publishing the material in full color for the first time ever!

The Hulk's nemesis, the Leader, returns in *In-*

credible Hulk #397; this four-part storyline continues into the celebration issue *Incredible Hulk #400.* The U-Foes are back as well, launching an attack on the Pantheon's home, the Mount, in order to steal their technology for the Leader. Writer Peter David has made the Hulk one of the strongest mid-line titles in the Marvel Universe--and those who worry that the upcoming departure of artist Dale Keown will hurt the book should remember that David kept the Hulk a hot title after the loss of Todd McFarlane, an artist who had a very strong following of his own...

Infinity War continues through dozens of Marvel books this summer, but the core storyline appears, naturally, in *Infinity War* the miniseries, written by Jim Starlin and illustrated by Ron Lim. It's almost the entire Marvel Universe versus an unknown power who is creating evil doppelgangers of the mightiest heroes--just the sort of action that sells crossover series! Fans never seem to tire of this sort of multi-hero extravaganza--and no one knows how to deliver better than Marvel!

Ted McKeever's *Metropol* is back in a new three-issue limited series, *Metropol A.D. #1.* Picking up a year after the events of Metropol, this series is a much faster-paced, harder-hitting story, presenting an epic confrontation between the forces of good and evil for control of the city.

Popular New Warrior *Night Thrasher* gets his own limited series, spinning off from the events of *New Warriors #25.* Complete with new armor, Night Thrasher is on the trail of Chord, who is the only hope for salvation that the Taylor Foundation has--but he's been kidnapped and may soon die. Fabian Nicieza, *New Warriors* writer par excellence, is joined by artist Dave Hoover for this miniseries; Mark Bagley supplies the covers.

Onyx Overlord, written by Moebius and Jean-Marc Lofficier and illustrated by Jerry Bingham, is a sequel to Moebius' *Airtight Garage;* in this four-issue limited series, P.I. Finegar discovers a plot to breach the barrier protecting her world from the Onyx Overlord, a construct controlled by Famechon Plikan. Plikan intends to use the Onyx Overlord to destroy the city and enslave its populace.

Punisher and Captain America: Blood and Glory, the three-issue prestige-format limited series by Dan Chichester, Margarate Clark, and Klaus Janson, has been pushed back from its initially-scheduled spring release to late summer--but the action is just as hard-hitting and exciting!

Spider-Man #26 is the final hologram-clad Spider-Man celebration issue--but the end of the hologram celebration doesn't bring an end to Spider-Man's super-hot summer. Fans who enjoy the web-slinger will really enjoy *Spider-Man: Soul of the Hunter.* This 48-page prestige format special by J.M. DeMatteis, Mike Zeck, and Bob McLeod is a sequel to *Kraven's Last Hunt;* Kraven's soul wasn't properly put to rest, so it still haunts Spider-Man, leading to a final confrontation between with Kraven's decaying corpse!

When you see the name William Shatner, it's only natural to think of *Star Trek*--but Marvel is confident that fans will soon be thinking of *Tekworld,* the new comics series based on Shatner's two successful science fiction novels. *Tekworld* is the story of Jake Cardigan, a former cop turned private eye who is involved with a drug war against an addictive brain stimulant called Tek. Jake is searching for the Tek dealers who framed him and sent him into suspended animation--but he also has to overcome his own Tek addiction!

The big event of the 1992, though, is the unveiling of the Marvel Universe of 2099. Unlike Marvel's last attempt at a "new universe," the universe of this exciting new series of titles is firmly tied in with Marvel's current universe. The *Spider-Man of 2099* will kick off the line in September, with the *Punisher, Dr. Doom,* and *Ravage* following by the end of the year. What fan will want to miss the introduction of a whole new world of Marvel heroes--particularly when their roots can be found in today's hit titles?!

DC

DC is the oldest comic book company still in business in America; from the company's beginnings in 1935 until the present day, DC has published more comics than anyone else

DC's first title was *New Fun #1,* published by Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson in 1935. This was the first comic book to contain all-new material and not just another bunch of comic strip reprints. Two years later, the company began *Detective Comics,* from which it took its DC name.

It was the publication of *Action Comics #1* in 1938 that made DC's fame and fortune, however; this was the first appearance of Superman, and it revolutionized the comic book industry. Thanks to Jerry Siegel's and Joe Shuster's Kryptonian creation, superheroes became a part of comic books--and the industry has never been the same.

In 1939,, Batman appeared in the pages of *Detective Comics #27;* in another year, DC would introduce the first super-hero team, the first appearance of Wonder Woman, the creation of the teenage sidekick in the pages of *Detective* with the introduction of Robin, and many more comic book standards.

As the 1940's came to a close, DC saw a decline in superhero popularity (as did every publisher in the industry). DC moved into radio-show tie-ins and adventure titles.

By the 1950's, the superhero had fallen off in popularity enough that DC put a major emphasis on romance comics, science fiction titles, westerns, and humor books (some humor titles featured such notable television and film stars as Bob Hope, Jackie Gleason, and Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis).

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Those of you who are avid super-hero fans today have DC to thank for the return to fame and glory of the super-hero. It was DC who decided to introduce a new hero, the Martian Manhunter, as a backup feature in *Detective Comics #225.* Shortly after that, DC followed it up with the return of the Flash in the pages of *Showcase #4*--although this was an all-new Flash, a man who was an avid fan of the Golden Age *Flash Comics* before he became the World's Fastest Man in his own world. Of course, many new fans discovered the Flash after his CBS television show last year (alas, the show has been cancelled--a shame, since it was probably the best comics-inspired show television ever offered).

The superhero field began to blossom again behind DC's lead, and by the early 1960's, DC had brought back updated versions of some of its most

popular creations, including Green Lantern, Hawkman, and the Atom. Even its science fiction and mystery titles had shifted towards super-heroes with the addition of Adam Strange in *Mystery in Space,* the Doom Patrol in *My Greatest Adventure,* and Dial H for Hero in *House of Mystery.*

While this resurgence in interest in superhero comics was going so strong that it earned the nickname of The Silver Age, one of DC's creations ventured in new directions. With comics superheroes become more and more popular, ABC decided the time was right for the superhero to hit the airwaves, and the *Batman* television show began not one, but two nights a week in 1966. The show, which used a "camp" approach that utilized silly humor, deadpan straightlines, and cliched cliffhangers, nonetheless became incredibly popular--so popular that "camp" became a part of DC's comics--and "go-go checks," a black-and-white check pattern, became a part of DC's cover motif.

In the late 1960's, DC pushed both into its past and into its comics future by bringing back such characters as The Spectre and a revised Green Arrow, and by making use of such now-greats as Berni Wrightson, Jeff Jones, Howard Chaykin, and others on books. As the 60's gave way to the 70's, DC continued to produce new comics hero ideas--not since the 1940's had so many different superheroes debuted in such a brief time period.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, the difference between DC and Marvel began to lessen as two of Marvel's best-known artist-creators, Steve Ditko and Jack Kirby, left Marvel and came to work for DC, bringing new and innovative ideas with them. *The Creeper, the Hawk and the Dove, the New Gods, Mr. Miracle,* and many other ideas were the result of the move by these two giants of the comics field. Ironically, some twenty years later, many of those same heroes have returned to the forefront of DC's current comics line, with others (such as *Omac*) soon to follow.

Meanwhile, new greats were beginning to work for DC, most notably Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams, who changed *Green Lantern* from just another superhero strip to one of the first "socially relevant comics" ever done. 1990 has proven to be equally good for *Green Lantern;* the new title from DC has been one of their most popular books this year.

In the 1970's, DC was active in the return of horror comics, gothic romances, sword-and-sorcery, and other genres--but unlike the late 1940's and early 1950's, DC's superhero emphasis never faded.

In the past decade, DC has been involved in creating or updating dozens of its heroes. As the comics market "grew up," becoming more mature and more financially able to support better-quality formats and more sophisticated ideas, DC moved into Baxter series (books printed with better printing methods on higher-quality paper), mini-series and maxi-series (series with a set, finite number of issues--anywhere from 2-issues to 12 issues), and most recently, prestige-format series.

DC ventured in graphic novels in the early 1980's, offering a variety of video game tie-ins, science fiction adaptations, and super-hero adventures in graphic novel format.

Not content with being the second-most-popular comic book company, DC decided that it was time to make a major push to regain its status as the #1 company in the comics field. Part of that push began in 1986, when DC brought its major characters--all of whom had undergone sales slumps in the 1980's--back into prominence again. With the publication of *Dark Knight,* the first prestige-format book, DC reestablished the Batman's image as a creature of the night. This revitalization of Batman would prove to be the precursor of major changes to come Suddenly comics were growing up, and people were looking at comics--and DC in particular--in a new light.

The biggest event of 1986, though, occurred when DC re-vitalized Superman in a six-issue miniseries written and illustrated by John Byrne--and then started *Superman* all over again with #1.

Crisis on Infinite Earths was DC's boldest move; the company "rewrote" fifty years of continuity by presenting a mini-series that combined all its comics worlds into a single continuity, altering, creating, and killing DC heroes in the process. From that point on, DC was an all-new company, and none of the old rules applied.

As DC reinterpreted several more of its old concepts, including the *Flash, Green Lantern,* and *Justice League,* people became aware more and more that DC was a company determined to push for #1. With the introduction of more expensive trade paperbacks, hardcover graphic novels, deluxe hardcover limited editions, and other collector's items, DC's growth in popularity has been phenomenal.

DC also staked its claim on the realm of mature horror with sophisticated, thought-provoking dark fantasy titles like *Swamp Thing, Sandman,* and *Shade the Changing Man.* DC's unique approach to horror, strong on mood rather than monsters and gore, found an avid, loyal audience.

In 1991, DC back the Archie Comics heroes in a new imprint, Impact Comics. After a little over a year marked by modest sales, however, DC announced plans to revamp the heroes later this year and to bring them back in a new line of comics in 1993.

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Thanks to the success of the first *Batman* film and its current sequel, *Batman Returns,* the Dark Knight has played a prominent role in the DC Universe. This year, in conjunction with the release of the second film, DC has unveiled a new Batman title, *Shadow of the Bat,* along with a variety of one-shots, graphic novels, and miniseries.

Hot Picks

Batman remains a perennial fan-favorite, partly due to the success of the latest Batman film and partly due to the enormous popularity of the character himself. *Batman: Shadow of the Bat,* the new series by Alan Grant and Norm Breyfogle, is the hottest Batman book since the debut of *Legends of the Dark Knight* in 1989. *The Batman Gallery* is a 32-page comic book sized collection that features many rare, classic, and never-before-seen pieces of Batman art from a variety of creators, including Adams, McFarlane, Perez, Zeck, Kubert, Robinson, Miller, and others. This book covers the entire panorama of Batman's fifty-plus year career. **Batman: Night Cries,** an August release, is a new fully painted hardcover graphic novel by Archie Goodwin and Scott Hampton; it's a somber look at the issue of child abuse. There are no super-villains here, no costumed threats--and none are needed as Batman must confront one of the grimmest threats that affects today's society.

One of the hottest Batman projects of the year, though, will be *Batman: Sword of Azrael,* a new

four-issue limited series by Dennis O'Neil, Joe Quesada, and Kevin Nowlan that introduces a new character into the Batman milieu. When Azrael, an enforcer for the semi-secret Order of Saint Dumas, is killed, his son travels to Europe to find out just what the Order is--and just who killed his father. Batman is also on the case--and inevitably, their paths cross. The first issue features a wraparound gatefold cover.

Darkstars , a September release, is a new sf-adventure superteam that will premiere in their own book courtesy of Jan Michael Freedman and Larry Stroman. This series is fully linked with the DC Universe and is set in contemporary times, so it will feature crossovers by popular DC heroes like Green Lantern, Hawkman, and Flash. Their first mission brings them Earth, where they must stop intergalactic drug lords who intend to set up our planet as their next sales front.

The multi-book crossover series ***Eclipso: The Darkness Within*** kicked off with a double-length special in May; for the remainder of the summer, the storyline continues through virtually every DC Annual. The Eclipso-focused theme revolves around the raging potential for evil that lurks in everyone, even the most heroic beings--or, in some cases, their supporting cast. In September, the villain of the storyline earns his own series entitled (appropriately enough) ***Eclipso,*** establishing his ongoing role as a major villain in the DC universe.

He's a hero with the incredible ability to aggravate people. He's ***The Heckler,*** and what he lacks in ability, he makes up for in enthusiasm. ***The Heckler*** is the latest creation of Keith Giffen, who is just as serious about this as you might expect...

The Justice Society is back! After events of the DC Crisis left these grand heroes wasting away in limbo for far too long, DC has finally brought ***The Justice Society of America*** back into the superhero spotlight. Now that the Justice Society is back, though, is there any need for them? That's the crucial question that ***Justice Society of America*** explores, courtesy of Len Strazewski, Mike Parobeck, and Mike Machlan.

Lobo, DC's ever-popular ultra-violent malcontent, has a busy summer in store: first, he stars in a new one-shot, then a new miniseries. ***Lobo: Blazing Chain of Love*** has Lobo the bountyhunter hot on the trail of a female target who has hidden out in the largest harem in the galaxy; it's a dangerous job, but someone has to do it--and you know it'll be Lobo! Giffen, Grant, and Cowan mastermind the hijinks. (A month later, ***Lobo: Infanticide*** presents a concept we never expected: Lobo in the army! It's a scheme by some of his illegitimate children to wipe out dear ol' dad forever. Keith Giffen, co-writer of every Lobo series thus far, handles the art honors himself in this four-issue limited series. And for Lobo fans with a lot of money, there' the ***Lobo Limited Edition Statue,*** produced exactly to orders. It won't be available until November, but you'll need to order it pronto to be sure you get one...

There are big changes in store in ***The New Titans*** this summer; for one thing, Donna Troy's baby will arrive before the season is over. For another, one of the Titans turns out to be a traitor. The really big event, though, is the introduction of a new Titans comic, Team Titans. The plot thickens in ***New Titans #89,*** really starts to simmer in ***New Titans #90,*** and comes to a boil in ***Team Titans #1.*** Forget about multiple covers; this comic has multiple comics! There are five different versions of the premiere issue, each featuring a totally different lead origin story focusing on one of the five Team Titans members. The backup story may be the same, but for your money, you're getting a book-length original story in each edition--it's like having five separate comics released in one month, with a common bonus backup tale in each!

A classic Charlton hero returns in a new series this summer: ***Peter Cannon: Thunderbolt #1*** reintroduces the costumed hero five years after his retirement from superheroing. His new base of operations is England, and he's much more reluctant to use his hero abilities--but since he has his own comic, you can be sure he'll eventually answer the superhero call. Michael Collins, a popular contributor to ***2000 A.D.,*** is the writer and penciller for the new series.

The Chris Claremont-Adam Hughes-Karl Story Star Trek graphic novel ***Debt of Honor,*** which should be on the stands by the time you read this, is a grand hardcover explores James Kirk's entire career in a storyline that begins in his days as a lieutenant and ends in the last days of his captainship. ***Debt of Honor*** is a must-have for any Star Trek fan.

Dark Horse

Dark Horse, now six years old, was started by publisher Mike Richardson in summer of 1986, at the height of the boom in black and white comics from small publishers that started with the phenomenal success of Mirage Studio's ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.*** Says editor Randy Stradley, "I had known Paul Chadwick through the pages of ***APA 5*** for a number of years and knew he had an idea for a strip, ***Concrete*** that he was trying to sell. I talked to him about Dark Horse publishing ***Concrete.*** He agreed to do eight page stories for our anthology comic, ***Dark Horse Presents.*** The book was very well received and sold far better than we expected. We thought it would sell 5000 to 10,000 and it sold over 50,000. That was just a very good

time for many black and white comics. We were very flushed with success. Our timing was very fortuitous, if we had come in even a few months later we might not have survived the first year. When the market got really overcrowded very quickly and a lot of the companies and comics that started in those next few months are not around today."

Dark Horse off to a strong start, which gave them the financial ability to outbid Marvel's Epic Comics for the rights to do a regular ***Concrete*** comic by Paul Chadwick. "The reason we've been able to attract top talent," says Stradley, "is that first we are willing to really share the profits with the creators, not just give them a small percentage as a royalty. So they make good money. Second, we allow our creators almost veritable creative freedom on the projects that they own."

Another critical and commercial success for Dark Horse was ***The American*** by Mark Verheiden. "I read the first script and it was wonderful. The best submission I had ever read. We began publication soon afterward and it has been very well received. The ***American*** has also been optioned for a live-action television show," says editor Stradley. Verheiden, creator of ***The American,*** also proved amazingly successful as the writer of several of Dark Horse's ***Aliens*** series.

Dark Horse's greatest successes came in licensed products. ***Aliens, Predator, James Bond, Star Wars, RoboCop, Terminator, and Indiana Jones*** have all been fan-favorites, and new miniseries involving all these characters are in the works. Frank Miller and Walt Simonson have joined forces on a new miniseries, RoboCop Vs. Terminator, that brings two very successful sf films together in one comic book miniseries.

Late last year, Dark Horse and DC joined forces to present ***Batman Vs. the Predator.*** Later this year, Dark Horse and Valiant comics will offer a new multi-company crossover as the Predator confronts Magnus, Robot Fighter.

In six years, Dark Horse has grown from a small publisher with a handful of black and white comics to one of the largest publishers in the comics market. The company's emphasis on quality has earned them a very strong fan following--and has attracted some of the biggest names in comics, including Frank Miller, John Byrne, Dave Gibbons, Mike Baron, Steve Rude, and many, many more, to their ranks.

Hot Picks

Dark Horse found its first major sales success with the ***Aliens*** miniseries; since then, the company has continued to offer a variety of quality Aliens miniseries. Later this year, acclaimed author Chris Claremont joins with artist Vince Giarrano to present a new ***Aliens Vs. Predator*** miniseries; look for a prequel in the pages of Dark Horse Comics (highlighted later in this segment).

Mark Verheiden's American returned after far too long an absence in ***The American: Lost In America,*** a four issue miniseries in which a reporter has a chance to become a core member of the governor's re-election campaign if he can only get an endorsement from The American; unfortunately, the American has joined a cult and disappeared! Chris Marrinan and Brian Garvey handle the art honors.

Dark Horse Comics is a new anthology book a la ***Dark Horse Presents,*** but with a couple of differences. First, the focus here is on licensed properties; second, ***DHC*** will be published in full color. The first issue leads off with a Predator tale by Ian Edgington and Rick Leonardi; it also features a RoboCop story and "Renegade" by Chris Claremont and Vince Giarrano, which will lead into Claremont's ***Aliens Vs. Predator*** series.

Eddie Campbell's ***Deadface*** is back in an all-new four-issue series, ***Deadface: Earth, Water, Air, and Fire.*** Vinnie Bossanova against the Mafia? It's just one of many unusual developments that accompany Bacchus and Simpson's trip to Sicily.

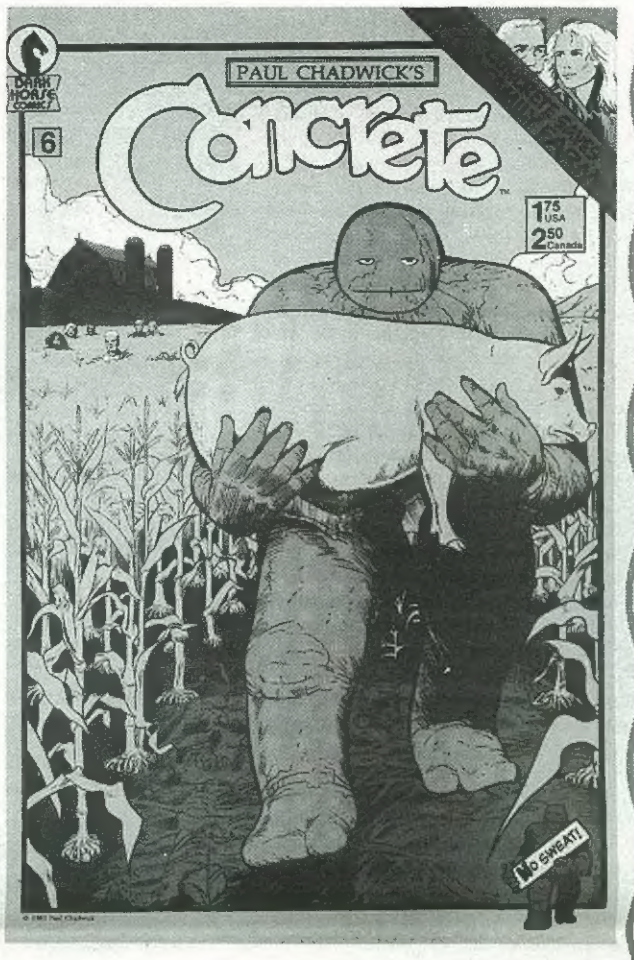
Godzilla Color Special #1, an August release, is a Japanese-monster tale in the classic tradition. The inhabitants of the island of Kurukai had always feared that the ancient demon imprisoned on their island might awaken--but when they find out that Godzilla is heading their way, they realize that releasing this demon might be their only hope for survival. Randy Stradley and Arthur Adams bring fans the big-monster blow-by-blow.

After a prolonged absence brought on by legal matters involving the book's former publisher, Grendel returns in August in an all-new ten-part limited series, ***Grendel: War Child.*** The story picks up years after the events of ***Grendel #40.*** The heir to the throne of the Grendel-Khan has been kidnapped--but there's no ransom demand--for the kidnapper is Grendel! Matt Wagner is both writing and inking the series; Patrick McEown is the new penciller.

Soviet Union or no Soviet Union, there are still international forces capable of opposing James Bond--and he faces some of them in ***James Bond 007: Serpent's Tooth,*** a story that includes lost nuclear weapons, dinosaurs, and strange happenings in South America--and James Bond is right in the thick of things, trying to recover the lost arsenal before it should fall in the wrong hangs. The real highlight of ***Serpent's Tooth,*** a three-issue limited series, is its creative team: Doug Moench and Paul Gulacy, creators who were born to do Bond!

At long last, Nexus returns to the comic shops this season--and it kicks off a cornucopia of Nexus projects that'll continue throughout the remainder of the year. ***Nexus: The Origin*** is a new 48-page prestige-format comic by creators Mike Baron and Steve Rude, representing the origin of Nexus, along with some intriguing new developments that should surprise and entertain even the oldest Nexus fans. Debuting in August, ***Nexus the Liberator*** is a new Stefan Petrucha/John Calimee miniseries that puts Nexus on the trail of a demi-god.

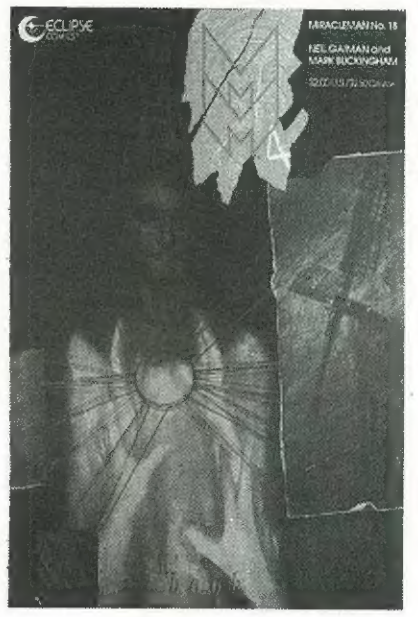
Fans will have a choice of New ***Star Wars*** or ***Classic Star Wars,*** courtesy of Dark Horse;



the publisher has acquired the rights to the Archie Goodwin-Al Williamson run on the newspaper series, and they'll publish them in color for the first time! Al Williamson has returned to redraw and extend panels on the strip art so as to make it fit into a comic-sized package, so this is totally unlike any other ***Star Wars*** reprint that's ever been published before.

Eclipse

Eclipse's current efforts are directed more towards graphic novels, trade paperbacks, and prestige format limited series than they are towards standard comic books. That really isn't that much of a change for Eclipse, though; in fact, while the company did offer quite a line of standard comics in the mid-80's, publisher Dean Mullaney never really envisioned Eclipse as just another comic book company.



"Eclipse actually started in April of 1977," Dean Mullaney said. "I was dissatisfied with the comics I was reading. I was visiting Don McGregor, a writer whose work I enjoyed, I saw a painting on the wall. I thought it was Jimi Hendrix, but he told me that it was a Paul Gulacy painting of a character that he and Paul had created–but that they hadn't been able to place it yet. I talked to Don about my publishing plans, and he said he was interested. Then I talked to my brother Jan, who put the money up, and we were ready to go." As it turns out, the first Eclipse publication, ***Sabre***, was also the first graphic novel done for the direct market.

In its early days, Eclipse published virtually nothing *but* graphic novels. "We published some great graphic novels--***Night Music*** by Craig Russell, ***Detectives Inc.*** by McGregor and Rogers--but we finally decided to try a periodical. Three years after Eclipse began, we released ***Eclipse Magazine***."

Eclipse expanded its line when it acquired a number of titles that had previously been published by Pacific Comics, a company that went out of business in the early 1980's. Growth came fast to Eclipse. Beginning as a company that published only an occasional graphic novel, by 1983 Eclipse was publishing 8 books a month. By 1984, the total had jumped up to a dozen a month. In 1987, Eclipse averaged 25 titles a month–but as the comics market became more and more glutted, Eclipse found growing interest for its non-comics-format publications. Today, the special projects make up the bulk of the Eclipse line; the comics that Eclipse publishes are primarily prestige-format limited series, although ***Miracleman*** and several manga translation series remain a vital part of Eclipse's line.

Eclipse remains the oldest privately-owned comics company, which makes the Eclipse operation quite different from Marvel's or DC's. "When you have your own company," Cat said, "you can look at things on a long-term basis. I don't have to make a profit off each and every book every quarter--since I answer only to myself, I can look at the longer-range plan. We can make enough money to cover the hard years, or to start expanding, or to get us through unexpected pitfalls like floods that wipe out our entire town. All of our profits are recycled into the company, to produce new comics. We don't have outside stockholders or a parent company we have to show a profit to."

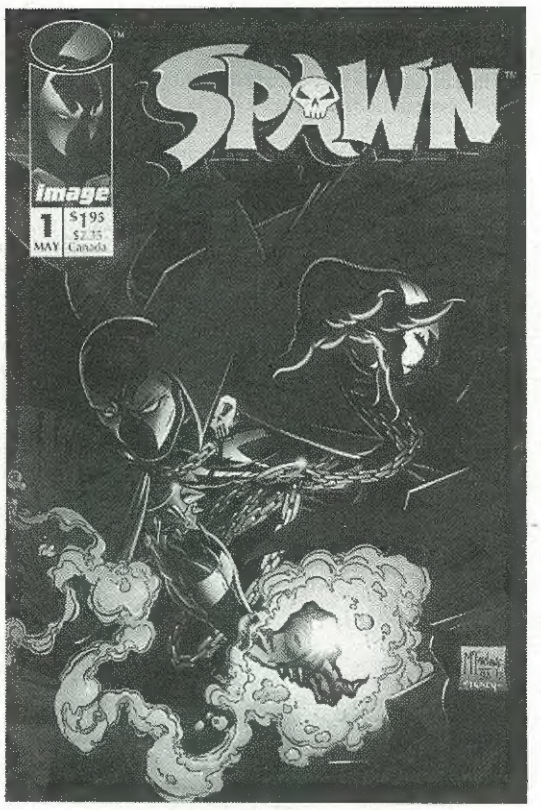
Earlier this year, Eclipse was the center of a maelstrom of controversy surrounding their ***True Crime*** trading cards; several communities actually proposed laws limiting the sales of the cards, overlooking the fact that half of the cards highlighted famous lawmen.

What is the reason for Eclipse's success? Dean Mullaney feels there's a pretty simple answer: "We were founded on the goal of letting creators keep their rights. I think it's criminal the way companies keep the copyrights and pay people off to sell their rights for their creations. People do their best work when that work is theirs--and that's what makes Eclipse successful."

Hot Picks

Clive Barker's Dread is a horrifying psychological drama brought to comics by Fred Burke and Dan Brereton. Quaid is fascinated by terror, so he concocts experiments in fear to see what horrifies others–and ultimately, to discover what lies at the core of his own fear. After focusing on book-length Clive Barker adaptations for a while, Eclipse will also return to the anthology format with ***Tapping the Vein #5***, featuring new adaptations of Clive Barker's tales from ***Books of Blood***. Eclipse has been very successful with its high-quality line of Clive Barker adaptations, which have been praised for remaining faithful to their source material.

Fx Comics, a new line of Eclipse comics that hopes to capture the feel of action-adventure films, kicks off with three titles. ***Blood Is the Harvest #1*** presents a world in which vampires have developed a tremendous power base and worldwide connections that enable them to keep their activities out of the limelight–until a trio of adventurers attack the vampires to avenge the death of a reporter. ***Parts Unknown #1*** is a science fiction tale about an alien breeding experiment on earth; the aliens are using



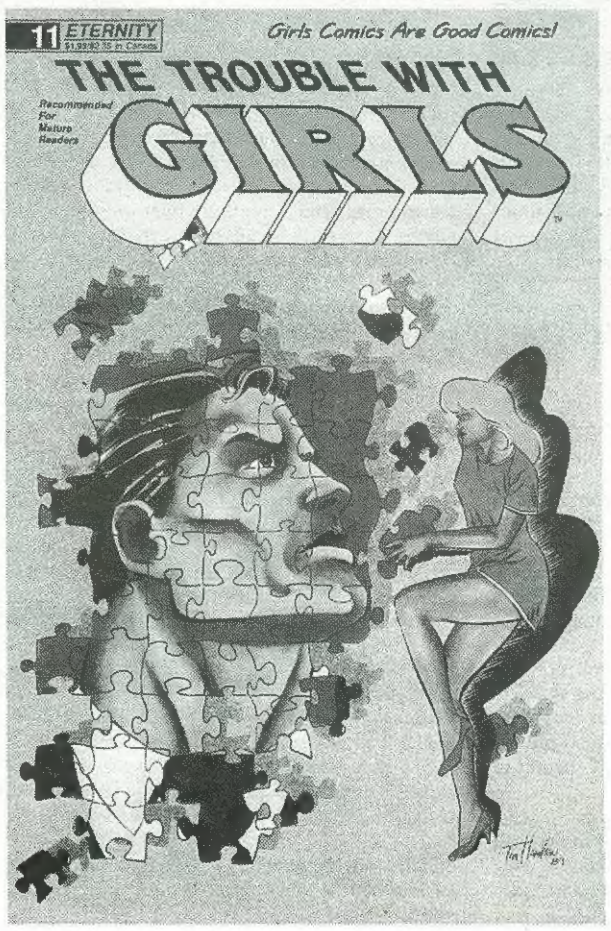
human females to replace the females of their own race. ***The Retaliator*** is a grim 'n' gritty hero tale about a former child abuse victim who has grown up to become a defender and avenger of abused children everywhere.

Summer's a great season for spiders–particularly if the Spider in question is the pulp hero whose first comic book series was a sleeper hit. ***The Spider: Reign of the Vampire King*** is loosely based on a 1933 Spider pulp adventure, and it introduces a group of super-villains who are powerful enough to challenge The Spider. Tim Truman and Enrique Alcatena, the creators of the first ***Spider*** series, are back again for more hard-edged pulp fun.

Malibu

Eternity • Aircel • Adventure
Malibu • Image

Malibu Graphics began as the now-defunct Malibu Comics. Explains art director Tom Mason, "The decision was made in late 1987 to combine the Malibu and Eternity titles under the Eternity masthead and move the editorial offices out to California." Dave Olbrich, Tom Mason, and Chris Ulm hold the same positions they held with Malibu. In the years since then, Malibu Graphics has taken over the Aircel and Adventure imprints from their former publishers and expanded them.



The new Eternity lineup continues to offer popular black-and-white action-adventure, including the critically acclaimed ***The Trouble With Girls, Lensman, Scimidar,*** and ***Robotech.*** "What we tried to do was impose the Malibu philosophy of comics publishing onto the Eternity books in terms of quality, high production values, and on-time publishing schedules," says Mason.

The ever popular Lester Girls, star of ***The Trouble With Girls***, proved very successful for Malibu--so successful, in fact, that the book was picked up by Marvel's Epic imprint, which has plans to release a new one-shot later this year.

Adventure's most popular titles are its two film tie-ins, ***Planet of the Apes*** and ***Alien Nation.*** The imprint also features a line of film adaptations, horror comics, and adventure titles.

The Malibu imprint, formed earlier this year, serves as a home to the company's original superhero team The Protectors as well as to high-profile hero-oriented projects like Tarzan. Malibu also acts as the publisher for Image Comics, the record-breaking line formed by seven top comics creators who left Marvel earlier this year to form their own interrelated line of superhero adventures.

According to Mason, Eternity's publishing philosophy is simple. "I try to publish the kinds of comics I like to read–and even more importantly, I try to publish the kinds of comics that Dave, my boss, likes to read. That's my secret of success in this business."

Hot Picks

Adventure

After more than two years, ***Alien Nation*** fans will at last enjoy the ending of the cliffhanger storyline that was left hanging when the television show was cancelled by Fox. ***Alien Nation: The Lost Episode*** summarizes the first half of the story and then presents the conclusion, all based on the original script that would have been filmed had Fox renewed the series.

Mary Roberts Rinehart's ***The Bat***, a classic mystery novel featuring a bat-costumed criminal, was one of the inspirations for Bob Kane's Batman; it's only appropriate, therefore, that ***The Bat*** should also appear in his own comic book series.

Eternity

Captain Harlock: Fall of the Empire #1 kicks off a new Gibson-Eldred Harlock miniseries that takes place after the apparent defeat of the Illlumidas. But are the aliens truly wiped out--or are they readying a final all-out attack? ***Fall of the Empire*** also includes an original Robotech serial in every issue.

Malibu/Image

Every Image Comics titles seems to be a hot book right now, but there are several new Image titles debuting this summer that fans should keep an eye on. ***Brigade*** is the first ***Youngblood*** spin-off in the growing Image line of comics; written and illustrated by Marat Mychaels and Hank Kanalz, it introduces the rebels of the Image universe.

Marc Silvestri, whose work has appeared in ***X-Men*** and ***Wolverine,*** offers his entry in the Image Universe this summer. ***CyberForce*** is a band of cybernetically enhanced mutants created by CyberData Corporation to do their dirty work--but before too long, the team turns against their creators and decides to use their power for good.

Jim Valentino, well known for his work on Guardians of the Galaxy, brings some mystery into the Image Universe with ***Shadowhawk.*** A brutal, no-holds-barred hero along the lines of Wolverine or the Punisher, Shadowhawk always gets results in his war on crime–but he also leaves behind a swath of corpses! The New York police would like to bring him in–but he's too busy saving the city from muggers, rapists, thieves, and the occasional supervillain to try to deal with the NYPD, too!...

Jim Lee (with writing assistance from Brandon Choi) is the creator of ***WildC.A.T.s,*** a new team of superheroes operating in the Image Universe--superheroes who are caught in the middle of a battle for Earth's future. Alien races have different plans for mankind; WildC.A.T.s have allied themselves with those who hope to preserve the planet.

Upcoming from Image later this year is ***Wetworks,*** a new series by Whilce Portacio; and ***The Pitt,*** the creation of Dale Keown.

Image Comics fans will also want to keep an eye out for the Image Coupons appearing in seven of Image's August titles (***Cyberforce #1, Shadowhawk #1, Youngblood #0, Brigade #2, WildCATs #2, Savage Dragon #3,*** and ***Spawn #4***). Collect all seven coupons and you can redeem them for a copy of the ultra-limited ***Image Comics #0,*** featuring short stories by Larsen, Lee, Liefeld, McFarlane, Silvestri, and Valentino.

The Protectors, an August release, isn't an Image title, but it *is* a superhero book featuring Malibu's newest super-team. Set in its own universe, the Protectors tells the story of a group of superheroes officially sanctioned by the President; they operate in a time when supernormal activity has been outlawed, so they have to work under government restrictions--but their adversaries aren't so limited! Look for several Protectors one-shots as well.

Tarzan: Love, Lies, and the Lost City, also an August release from Malibu, is a new three-issue Tarzan limited series featuring stories written by Walt Simonson and Matt Wagner. The "Opar" storyline is serialized throughout the three-issue run, with different back-up Tarzan stories completing the book's 48 pages.

Later this year, Malibu will revive The Ex-Mutants, a science fiction series that was one of Malibu's first comics projects.

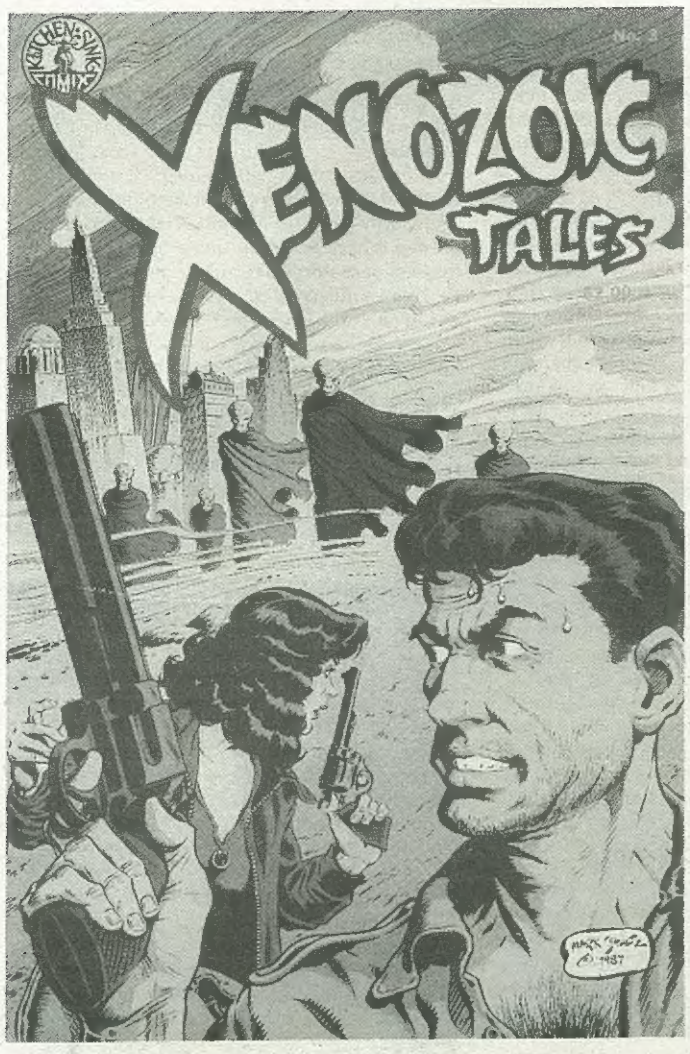
Kitchen Sink

Kitchen Sink Press is one of the oldest of the independent publishers. According to publisher and founder Dénis Kitchen, "We go way back to 1969. This is our twenty-first year, which makes us one of the real pioneers in the business. In fact, I think it was Mike Gold who told me recently that nobody, no individual has been a publisher longer than I have. I challenged him on that, and he said 'OK, name someone who has been at it longer,' and I really couldn't."

Kitchen Sink started out as a publisher of what were known as "underground comix." These were generally "adults-only" titles that dealt with and were aimed at the counter-culture audience during the late sixties and seventies. Kitchen Sink was one of the first to publish works by Robert Crumb, Jay Lynch, Skip Williamson among others (including Dennis Kitchen, who is himself one of the bigger talents as a writer and artist among the underground creators.).

But early on Kitchen Sink diversified and started doing more mainstream comics as well. "The first major coup in that regard was Will Eisner's ***The Spirit*** in 1971." says Kitchen, "That was an important diversification for us. After that we started reprinting classic comics by others including Milton Caniff. We did ***Steve Canyon*** and we've obtained the rights to reprint virtually everything that Harvey Kurtzman ever did, except his issues of ***MAD*** comics, which Russ Cochran has reprinted already. We're also reprinting Al Capp's ***Lil' Abner,*** which will eventually be published as a 54-volume series."

Possibly the most significant contribution of Kitchen Sink's classic comics line remains the chronological reprinting of Will Eisner's ***The Spir-***



it. According to Kitchen, "*The Spirit* is a unique and special strip in many ways. Newspaper comics traditionally were in the comic strip format. But Will Eisner came up with the idea in 1940 to give newspapers a comic book supplement. That had never been done before. So he created these eight-page supplements where the *Spirit* would be the lead feature with strips such as *Lady Luck* and *Mr. Mystic*. That was a cull-color supplement that ran in newspapers across the country from 1940 until 1952. So it was unique in that regard."

But reprinting the classics isn't all that Kitchen Sink does. "We are also publishing what are, I think, some of the best contemporary comics as well. *Xenozoic Tales* is one of them. That's by Mark Schultz, who has a terrific style."

Kitchen Sink was also one of the first publishers of Graphic Novels with the publication of *A Contract With God* by Will Eisner in 1978. Says Kitchen, "That book was really a forerunner, which I don't think it gets credited with enough. I think that it is easy to forget that Eisner was an innovator there, as in so many areas in comics. I consider Eisner to be our prime talent; here's this guy who has been in the field for sixty years, and he's still creating some of the most exciting material around."

Denis Kitchen concluded saying this about Kitchen Sink Press: "I think that we don't underestimate our audience. We are very seriously interested in comics and comics history. Kitchen Sink Press is basically here for the long run. Our goal is to preserve the best comics from the past and to present some of the best talent of today. That's our publishing philosophy in a nutshell."

Hot Picks

Cadillacs and Dinosaurs 3-D #1 features two early *Xenozoic Tales* stories, all reprocessed in 3-D by Roger May. 3-D Glasses are bound into each issue.

Many of comics' masters have retired from the field--but thankfully, Will Eisner isn't one of them. This summer, Eisner returns with a graphic novel in three parts, each affordably priced so that every Eisner fan can afford the entire novel. The series examines the anonymity and isolation of life in the big city, beginning with ***Invisible People: Sanctum,*** the story of a man whose erroneous obituary leads to his isolation from his own world--an isolation that he at first desired, but now loathes. The second installment, ***Invisible People: The Power,*** tells the tale of Morris, born with the power to heal--and with a weakness for liquor.

Fantagraphics

Fantagraphics founder and publisher Gary Groth has been involved in publishing since 1968 when he began publishing what were then called fanzines (fan magazines). He took over publication of the *Nostalgia Journal*, a tabloid newspaper, in late 1976. The title was changed to the *Comics Journal* a few issues later, and it was switched over to a magazine with #37 in 1977. The magazine remained Fantagraphics' sole publication until the early 19980s. As Kim Thompson, editor at Fantagraphics, says, "The first comic we published was *Love and Rockets* in 1981. The Hernandez brothers had self-published what ended up being the first half of our first issue. It was black and white and comic book size. They had sent a copy to us for possible review in the *Journal*, and we liked it so much we offered to publish. We took the first issue and what they had prepared for the second and published a big first issue. The Hernandez (Gilbert and Jamie) brothers had sent their stuff everywhere and nobody was interested. Sales were OK with the first issue, dropped off to only 4,000 with the second, and started picking back up with the third. They've continued to climb and, of course, the critical response to their work has been tremendous."

Next came several projects. Fantagraphics acquired *Journey* from Aardvark-Vanaheim. They also started another comics magazine, *Amazing Heroes,* which began be-weekly publication and subsequently reverted to monthly ; recently the title was put on hiatus. Next came *Nemo* magazine and the classic comics reprint series such as *Popeye* and *Prince Valiant.* One of the most prominent and impressive additions to the Fantagraphics reprint line was the Rick-Marschall edited *Complete Little Nemo* series, which reprints the classic Winsor McKay strips in full color in an oversized format.

Fantagraphics followed up *Love and Rockets* with several other offbeat comic magazines including *Neat Stuff, Hate, Eightball,* and others.

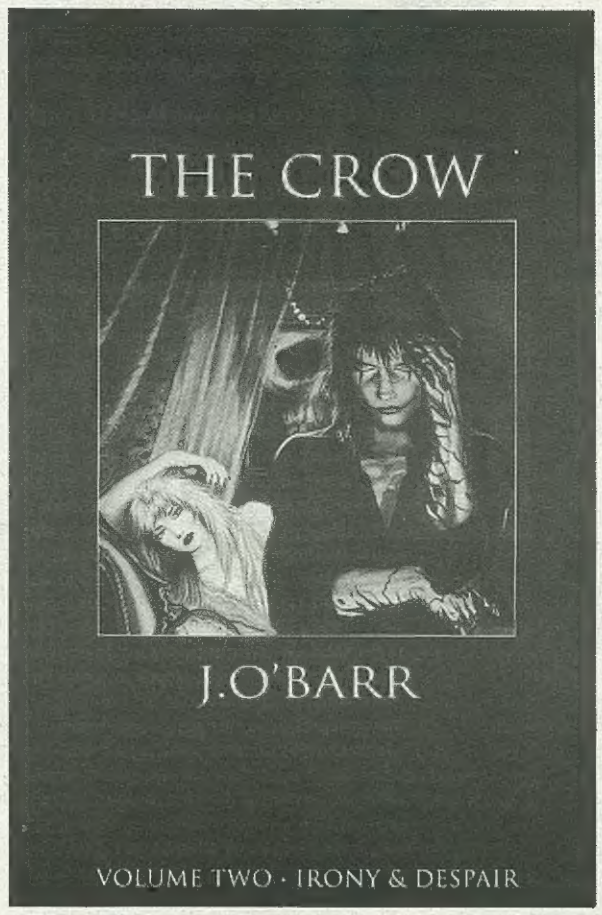
Fantagraphics continues to publish one of the oldest continuing comics publication, *The Comics Journal, "Comics Journal* views comic books as a more durable, mature Art. It takes a more critical approach to the medium."

Last year, Fantagraphics added two new imprints to its line: Eros Comics (for adult material) and Monster Comics. Each targets a specialized audience that might not normally read Fantagraphics books.

Hot Picks

The Love and Rockets Sketchbook Volume Two features another look into the sketchbooks of the Hernandez Bros.; included are several finished sequences that were edited out of the continuity at the last minute. Fantagraphics also has a set of 36 *Love and Rockets Trading Cards* ready for summer release.

Stan Sakai has made his *Usagi Yojimbo Color Specials* an annual summer event; *Usagi Yojimbo Color Special #3* features a Usagi story, a Groundthumper and Hermy chapter, and a story featuring Space Usagi, the hero of a new Sakai series from Mirage



Tundra

Tundra is the creation of Kevin Eastman, who is already well-known to comics fans for his work on Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, which he co-created with Peter Laird. The company is dedicated to diversity in comics; Tundra has featured work a wide range of American and European comics artists and writers in its line. There is no uniform "company feel" to the line; instead, Tundra is determined to give quality creators an opportunity to see their work published in the highest quality format possible in order to reach the widest possible audience. Tundra's line features both new work from innovative creators and high-quality reprints. Recently, Tundra acquired *Heavy Metal* Magazine; the company will revitalize the publication in the near future.

Hot Picks

If you missed out on ***Bratpack*** when the miniseries debuted, you can enjoy the whole series in one handsome volume now. ***The Bratpack Collected Edition*** features all five issue's of Rick Veitch's revisionist-superhero look at kid sidekicks--and it features an all-new conclusion to the storyline!

Lots of companies have environmentally-focused comics--but how many of them feature a team of superheroic *plants?! Greenhouse Warriors,* a new series by Dakin and Elliot, features Thistle, Poppy, Sunflower, and Cactus, a super-quartet created in the greenhouses of Dr. Glass; their mission is to save the world--and mankind--from ecological destruction.

In celebration of fifteen years of English-translation Moebius comics, Tundra is offering a six-volume ***Legends of Arzach Gallery*** series; each Gallery features eight full color prints by some of the industry's best-known talents, plus a special four-page Arzach story chapter by Jean-Marc Lofficier and Moebius.

The Maximortal is the latest book in Rick Veitch's King Hell Heroica storyline; it's the somewhat familiar story of True-Man, a costumed character created in 1934 by two kids from Slumburg. When their fictional creation becomes real, though, the world is changed forever in ways that no one foresaw.

Any book that offers new work by Alan Moore, Eddie Campbell, Mark Martin, Neil Gaiman, Mark Nelson, and Michael Zulli is a must-have; you can find all those creators, and more, in the pages of ***Taboo #6.*** As a special extra, a "penny dreadful" introductory booklet previewing the Gaiman-Zulli ***Sweeney Todd*** series is included with each copy of this issue of ***Taboo.*** From Hell fans will be thrilled with a massive forty-page installment of this Jack the Ripper serial.

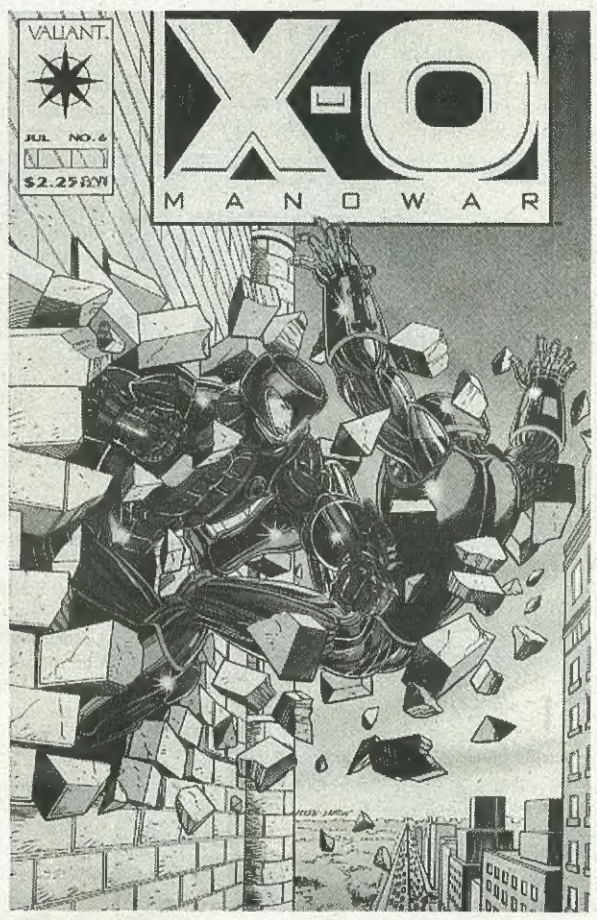
Valiant

Valiant Comics was the brainchild of Steve Massarsky and Jim Shooter. At one point, the two had hoped to purchase Marvel Comics; when that fell through, they decided to use their market expertise to form a company of their own. Utilizing a combination of classic heroes originally published by Gold Key and original creations from Shooter, Bob Layton, Barry Windsor-Smith, and others, the company began publication in 1991. Response to their books was overwhelmingly positive; many retailers report that they haven't seen this much excitement from fans since the early days of Marvel Comics. Valiant's recent Unity crossover series, tying in all the company's titles in a single massive storyline that resulted in the death of one of their heroes, seems to have drawn thousands of new fans to the company's titles. This summer, Jim Shooter left Valiant, but the company intends to continue in the same direction under the aegis of Bob Layton and Barry Windsor-Smith.

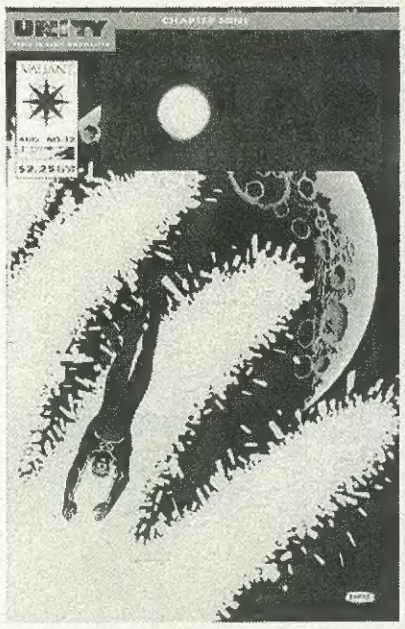
Hot Picks

Currently, *every* Valiant title seems to be a hot pick. Sales are picking up every month, and many readers seem interested in the entire line rather than in just a title or two.

A new super-team, the HARD Corps, debuts in ***Harbinger #10,*** which is the first part of a



two-part story. ***Harbinger #11*** is a can't-miss title for two reasons: first, it features the battle with HARD Corps, who debut in their own monthly series beginning this fall. Second, it features an ***Elfquest*** crossover. Yep, you read that right...



How does the Valiant Universe of today tie in with the Valiant Universe of 4001? That question is answered in ***Rai #0,*** a must-have for fans of Valiant continuity. This issue, which features the origin of Rising Spirit, details the events that have shaped the Valiant Universe in the two millennia interlude. Virtually every Valiant hero is featured in this issue.

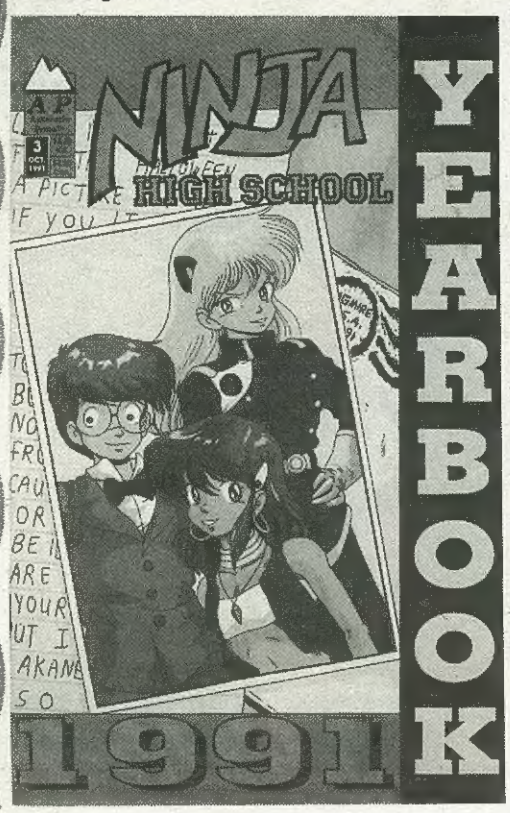
Other Hot Picks

AC

Femforce reaches the big Five-Oh this summer; in celebration, Bill Black and Mark Heike bring together virtually every member of the Femforce team for a special storyline, including Yankee Girl, Jet Girl, Miss Masque, and many others. ***Femforce #50*** will also include a special flexidisc version of "Something Special," the Femforce theme song, as recorded by the Keys.

Antarctic

Fans have enjoyed Ninja High School in black and white, Ninja High School in color--but this summer will offer them, for the first time, ***Ninja High School in 3-D.*** The 32-page comic features the Ninja High School gang in satires of popular sf films. And if you want to see Ninja High School presented in a decidedly different style, take a look at ***Small Bodied Ninja High School #1,*** prepared in the tradition of Japanese manga and model kits (big heads, big eyes, little bodies). This August release is available in both a regular and a deluxe edition.



Archie-AMERICA'S TOP TEEN-AGER IN
PEP COMICS
NO. 71
Archie
JAN. 1949
I JUST HAPPENED TO THINK... WHO ARE YOU TAKING TO THE SCHOOL DANCE NEXT WEEK, ARCHIE?
10¢

Archie

Archie's latest ecologically-oriented superteam, The Conservation Corps, premieres in ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Meets the Conservation Corps Special #1,*** a 64-page one-shot by Castiglia, Nakrosis, and Allan. This double-sized special also includes pinups by Sergio Aragones, Stan Sakai, and tom McWeeney.

Caliber

Kilroy Is Here is a moody, enigmatic series by Joe Pruett, focusing on a malevolent force that has preyed on humanity throughout the ages. Known as Kilroy, he seems inextricably drawn to war, famine, hunger, and death. Brian Bolland contributes the cover to ***Kilroy Is Here #1,*** an August release.

Krey is a science-fiction story about a young human raised as a slave by a warrior mutant race; eventually, though, he comes in contact with other human beings and is forced to choose sides in the war between the mutants, who have eventually accepted him as one of their own, and the human race.

Continuity

Ms. Mystic was one of the first independent superhero series; when it appeared a decade ago, its strongly environmental storyline was a relatively new trend in comics. Unfortunately, the series' bright future was dimmed a great deal by its horribly sporadic publication schedule; a gap of years between issues certainly made it difficult to keep up with plot-threads... Well, Continuity now promises that with the release of ***Ms. Mystic Volume 2 #1,*** the series will appear on a regular basis! The new creative team for Ms. Mystic is Dwayne Turner (artist of Cage) and Neal Adams; Peter Stone is the writer for this series (as well as most of Continuity's line).

Fleetway-Quality

Dredd Rules #10 is a must-have for fans of quality comics art; it features the first new Dredd story by fan favorite Simon Bisley! Bisley will continue to contribute to this series for the foreseeable future, meaning that many Lobo collectors will have another must-have title to add to their collecting list. True Bisley aficionados will also want the ***Dredd Rules Poster*** that reproduces Bisley's cover to ***Dredd Rules #10.***

Innovation

If you're going for a summer evening stroll, be careful when you approach ***Avenue X.*** ***Avenue X*** is the story of a teen-aged girl who was bitten by a vampire in New York City; now she lives in the shadowy punk culture of the Big Apple. This comic series is based on a radio serial broadcast by WBAI radio in New York; Brenda Black, ***Avenue X***'s creator, also writes the comic book.

Fans have been asking when ***Hero Alliance*** would be coming back, and at last Innovation has an answer for them. ***The Hero Alliance Special,*** a summer release, is a transitional book paving the way for the return of ***Hero Alliance*** later on this year. In this special, everyone gets new costumes and a new headquarters, and some new British heroes are introduced.

Ready for an Innovative horror series? Then you'll want to latch onto ***J.N. Williamson's Masques,*** a prestige-format anthology series featuring comics adaptations of stories by some of horror's finest writers, including Robert McCammon and Stephen King. Covers feature art by such prominent talents as Boris Vallejo and Olivia de Berardinis.

Millennium

Millennium's latest Doc Savage miniseries, ***The Devil's Thoughts,*** pits a young Clark Savage Jr. against the Hanoi Shan, who hopes to bring Shiva the Destroyer back into the world. This three-issue series by Moore, Stiles, and DeLay features Doc Savage in a storyline set two years before the first Doc Savage pulp.

Not only does Doc Savage have a new miniseries lined up for the summer, but so does his cousin. ***Pat Savage, Woman of Bronze Special*** features art by Adam Hughes, Brian Stelfreeze, Darryl Banks, and Joe Phillips; the story presents Pat Savage's first solo adventure as she takes on the mob.

Mirage

It's going to be an Eastman and Laird summer, and that's bound to be good news for TMNT fans. Eastman and Laird return to their most famous creations beginning with ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #48,*** when they begin scripting the series again; with ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #50,*** the duo is back as writers and artists, beginning a thirteen part story that picks up where the last Eastman and Laird story left off. Fans who weren't around when the Turtles first appeared will be able to relive that event when Mirage releases ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #1*** in a special 64-page softcover edition with an introduction by Harlan Ellison. For fans who want more than just the first issue, there's ***The Collected Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #1,*** reprinting ***TMNT*** #1-11 and all four microseries in one 500+page volume. Fans with a bigger budget might want to reserve the limited-edition $75 ***Leonardo Bust,*** sculpted by A.C. Farley.

NBM

The Ray Bradbury Chronicles is being released in trade paperback from Bantam/Spectra, but NBM is offering the series in hardcover to comic shops. Each volume features eighty pages of Ray Brad-

MARVEL COMICS
COLLECTING MARVEL COMICS IS LIKE HANGING OUT WITH OLD FRIENDS.
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bury comics adaptations, including a re-colored EC Bradbury reprint, for $22.95. The real collectible, though, is the signed and numbered hardcover edition signed by virtually the entire creative team, including Bradbury himself.

NBM will launch an ambitious *Tarzan* reprint series beginning this fall; the series, which will take 4 1/2 years to complete, will reprint every Hal Foster and Burne Hogarth color Sunday Tarzan page in the same high-quality format NBM has used for its Captain Easy reprints.

Now

We're off to see the Lizard!... Mr. Lizard, one of the more popular members of Ralph Snart's supporting cast, earns his own special this summer. ***Mr. Lizard Special #1*** looks back on the rowdy reptile's freshman year of college; there's also a four-page Mr. Lizard origin story. Each copy is polybagged with a color Mr. Lizard button.

Speed Racer's return continues through the summer–and fans can look forward to the return of

Speed's older brother, Racer-X, who joins forces with Speed, Pops, Trixie, and Sparky to rescue the Mach V and stop those who want to steal Pops' plans for the Mach VI.

Rebel

Faust fans will be glad to hear that not only is ***Faust Act Nine*** on schedule for August, but that Rebel also has a set of ***Faust Trading Cards*** coming up this summer as well! The cards, all featuring Tim Vigil's graphic art, are packaged in a black collector's box.

Slave Labor

Scott Saavedra, who has had more than a little experience presenting exciting anthropomorphic adventures as the creator of Disney's ***Rescue Rangers*** comic, has a new "funny animal" series on line for the summer: ***Rats!*** The Rats are good guys who do battle with, among others, Baron Molehang, the self-proclaimed prince of crime.

Tales From the Heart, the story of a Peace Corps volunteer in central Africa, has been featured in a couple of Epic Comics one-shots (including one coming out this summer), but the series is also appearing from its original publisher, Slave Labor. ***Tales From the Heart #9,*** containing all-new stories, also features a cover by Chas Truog.

Warp

Ever wonder how Elfquest would look if John Byrne drew it? Or how Cutter and Skywise might appear if the Tiny Toons crew reinterpreted them? Well, you'll be able to find out when ***Elfquest: New Blood Summer Special #1*** appears. John Byrne, Terry Beatty, Lea Hernandez, Gary Kato, and Ken Mitchroney are just a few of the creators who contribute to this unique full color book.

Have you seen anything in this issue of ***Comic Shop News*** that you can't live without? Make sure you don't miss it; clip this handy coupon and write down the things that you want you comics shop owner to be sure to get for you!

Name_____ Phone _____

I gotta have 'em! Please reserve for me the following items mentioned in ***Comic Shop News!***

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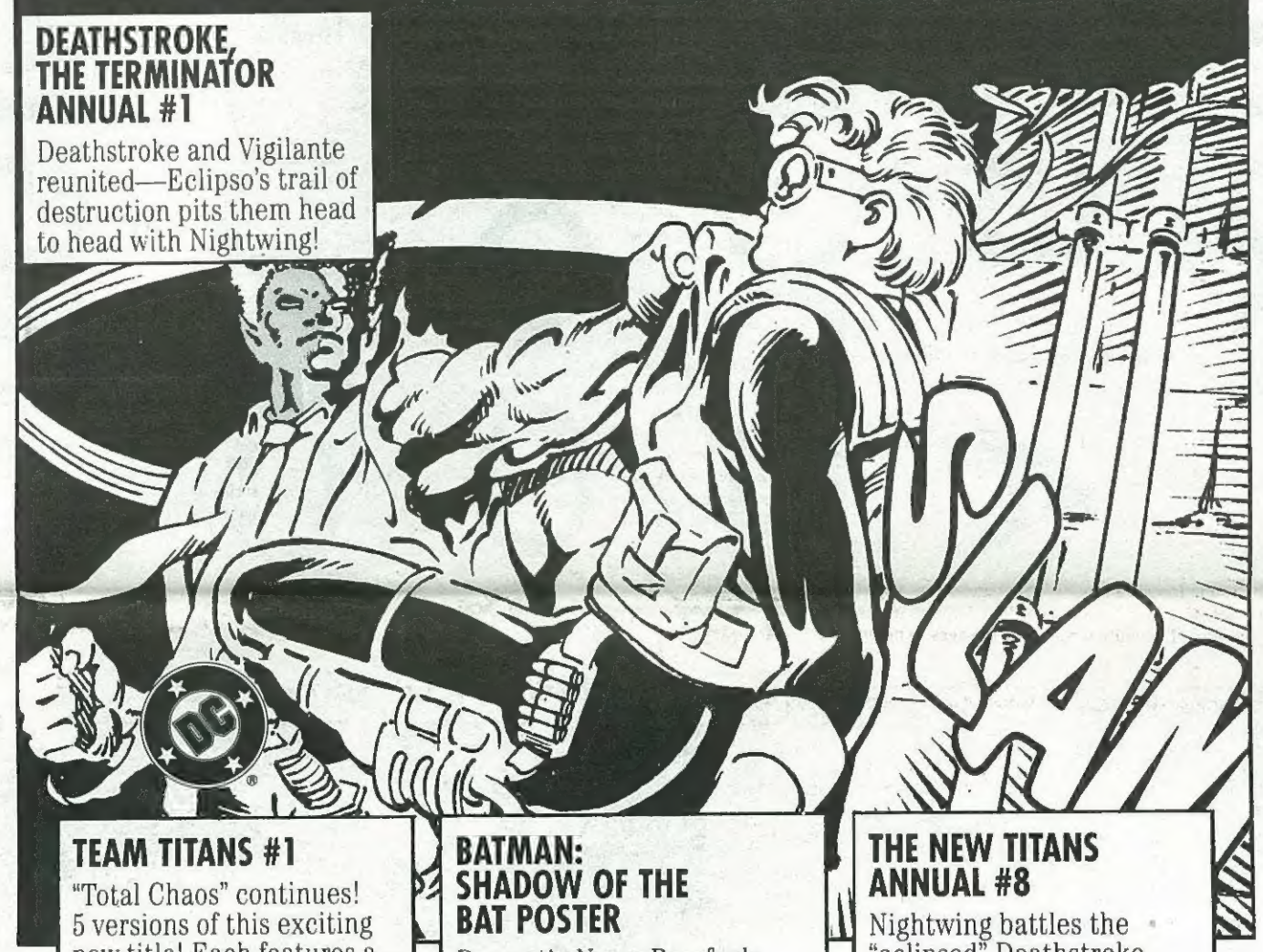
Be sure to give this to your retailer. Do not send it to ***CSN!*** Your comics shop will make every effort to get the items you want; some items may require a down payment before your shop owner can get them for you; be sure to ask!

MORE THAN SUPER-HEROES (BUT WE'VE GOT THEM TOO!)

DEATHSTROKE, THE TERMINATOR ANNUAL #1

Deathstroke and Vigilante reunited—Eclipso's trail of destruction pits them head to head with Nightwing!



TEAM TITANS #1

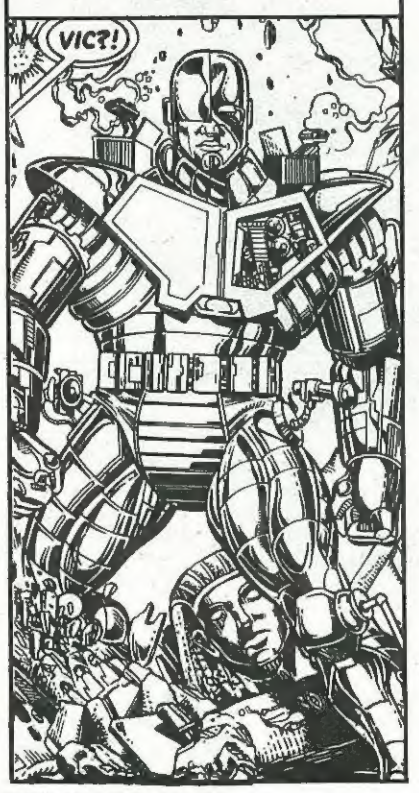
"Total Chaos" continues! 5 versions of this exciting new title! Each features a different 18-page character origin—plus—21-page bonus story!

BATMAN: SHADOW OF THE BAT POSTER

Dramatic Norm Breyfogle art commemorates new ongoing Batman title!

THE NEW TITANS ANNUAL #8

Nightwing battles the "eclipsed" Deathstroke, Vigilante, and his fellow Titans teammates!



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MORE THAN SUPER-HEROES (BUT WE'VE GOT THEM TOO!)

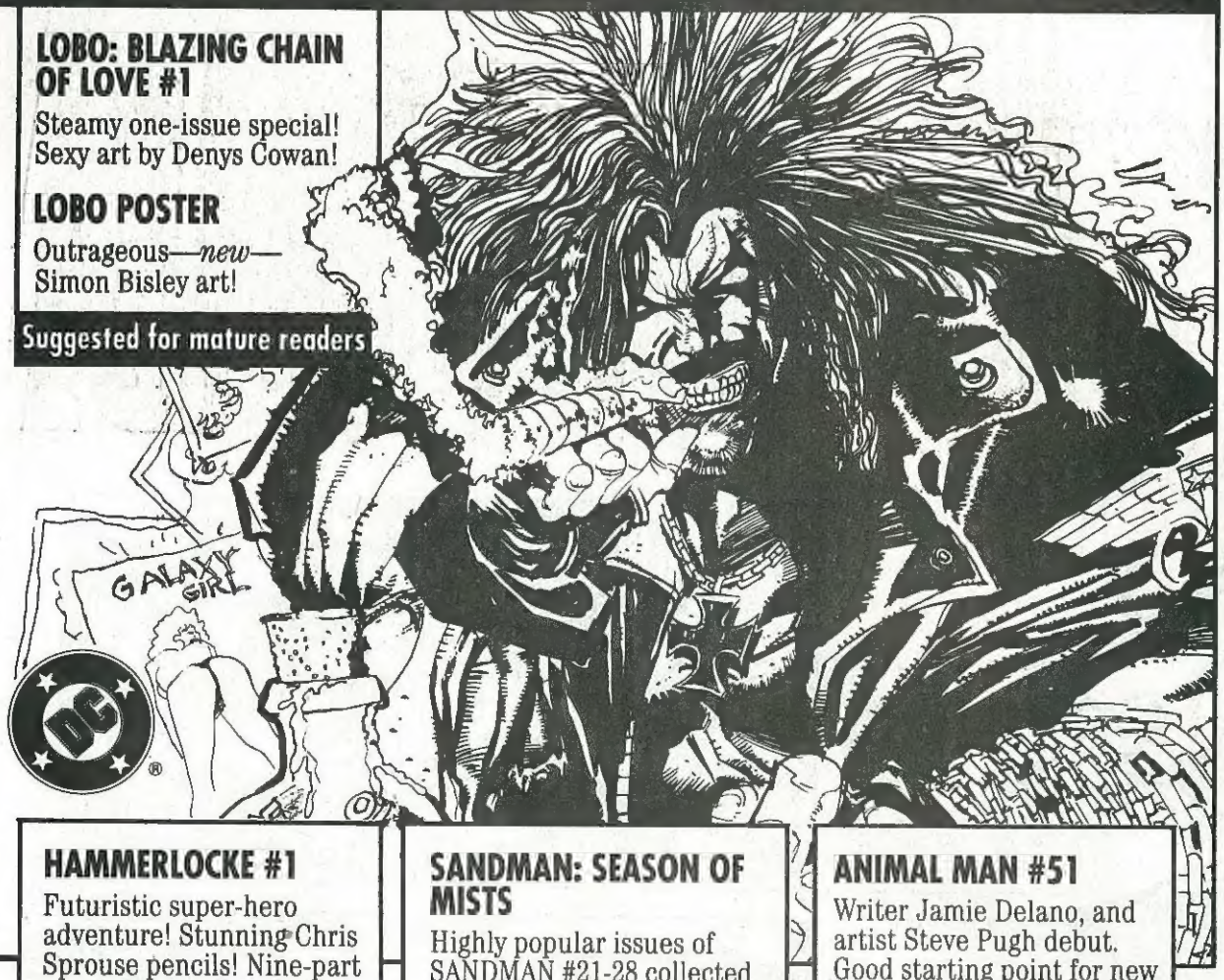
LOBO: BLAZING CHAIN OF LOVE #1

Steamy one-issue special! Sexy art by Denys Cowan!

LOBO POSTER

Outrageous—*new*—Simon Bisley art!

Suggested for mature readers



HAMMERLOCKE #1

Futuristic super-hero adventure! Stunning Chris Sprouse pencils! Nine-part maxiseries.

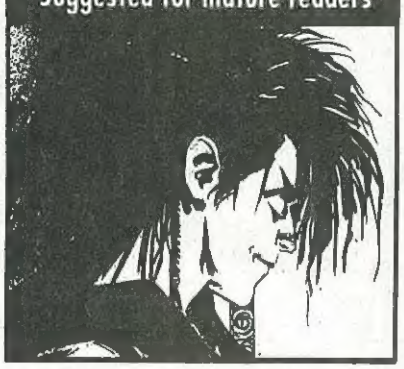
SANDMAN: SEASON OF MISTS

Highly popular issues of SANDMAN #21-28 collected in a deluxe hardcover and trade paperback format. Attention, new readers—introduction of the entire Endless family.

SANDMAN AND THE ENDLESS POSTER

By popular demand—*new* portrait of Sandman and his mysterious siblings by Mike Dringenberg.

Suggested for mature readers



ANIMAL MAN #51

Writer Jamie Delano, and artist Steve Pugh debut. Good starting point for new readers. Now suggested for mature readers.

Suggested for mature readers

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